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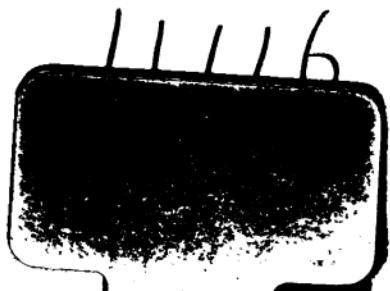
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LIFE OF WICLIF.

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T. D. Dean, Jr.

JOHN WYCLIFFE, D. D.

THE
L I F E
OF
W I C L I F.

BY
CHARLES WEBB LE BAS, M.A.
LATE PRINCIPAL
OF THE EAST INDIA COLLEGE.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
FRANCIS & JOHN RIVINGTON,
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, AND WATERLOO PLACE.

1846.



P R E F A C E.

SINCE the appearance of the first Edition of this volume, two of the Tracts usually ascribed to Wiclid, have been very carefully and learnedly edited by Dr. Todd, Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin : namely, "The Last Age of the Church ;" and another, to which the Editor has given the title of "An Apology for Lollard Doctrines¹."

In his Preface to the former of these publications, the Editor observes, that "until the works of Wycliffe, real and supposititious, be collected and published, it is in vain to talk of determining his opinions, or fixing his merits as a Reformer :" and

¹ "The Last Age of the Church," by John Wycliffe : now first printed, from a manuscript in the University Library, Dublin. Edited, with Notes, by James Henthorn Todd, D.D., Dublin, 1840.

"An Apology for Lollard Doctrines," attributed to Wiclide : now first printed from a manuscript in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin : with an Introduction and Notes By the same Editor. London, printed for the Camden Society, 1842.

he adds, that “it is with the hope of directing attention to this subject that the following Tract is now printed.” (Preface, p. viii.) He then proceeds to remark, that “perhaps we have all the Manuscripts that existed in Henry Wharton’s time ; and that it may still be within our power to rescue them from the oblivion in which they have so long been suffered to remain : but that the chances of their destruction are every day becoming greater, and that delay in such an enterprize is highly dangerous.” (p. ix.) And he asks, “What nobler, what more imperishable monument, could the gratitude of England raise to her first Reformer, than a complete and uniform edition of his extant writings ?” (p. x. xi.) But there is a preliminary question highly deserving of attention ; and that is, what certain grounds have we for attributing to Wiclid the writings which exist under his name ? And this question furnishes an additional motive for one great national effort to preserve the remains which now bear the name of the Reformer. For, as the Editor remarks, in his Introduction to the Apology for Lollard Doctrines, (p. lxiii.), “until all these writings are collected and published, under the care of competent editors, the learned world will not be in a condition to discuss the genuineness of any Tract attributed to Wiclide, or to decide upon the real character of his doctrines.”

These are considerations which may well abate

the confidence of any biographer of Wiclf at the present day. And, therefore, in offering a new Edition of this volume, I have, in the first place, to remind the Public that the object of it is to produce, within a reasonable compass, and in a popular form, the substance of the information collected by my predecessors : and, in the second place, I gladly take this opportunity of expressing an ardent hope that the suggestions of Dr. Todd will meet with the attention which they deserve ; and that the time may come when the present humble compilation, and all preceding attempts to form an accurate estimate of Wiclf, may be entirely superseded by the more successful labours and researches of learned and public-spirited men. Such labours have become all the more necessary, since a modern Church historian² has pronounced the opinion, that a careful examination of the original records will show that the services of Wiclf, as a Reformer, have been considerably exaggerated. The question is one, respecting which all historic doubts should, if possible, be finally cleared up.

In the present Edition, several mistakes have been corrected ; some superfluities retrenched ; and the language of perhaps incautious panegyric has, in various instances, been somewhat moderated. In other respects, the work is, essentially, unaltered.

² Milner, vol. iv. p. 121. Lond. 1819.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
General View of the gradual corruption of Christianity, to the middle of the fourteenth century	1

CHAPTER II.

View of Christianity in England, to the middle of the fourteenth century	38
---	----

CHAPTER III.

1324—1367.

Birth of Wiclid—Wiclid admitted at Queen's College, Oxford—Removes to Merton College—Acquires the title of Evangelic Doctor—His mastery in the scholastic learning—His tract on the Last Age of the Church—He commences his attacks on the Mendicant Orders—Notice of the first institution of the Mendicants—Their efficacy on their first Establishment—Their enormous increase—Their rapacity and turbulence—Their introduction into England in 1221—Its bad effects—Richard Fitzralph's opposition to them, followed up by Wiclid—The sum of Wiclid's objection to them contained in a tract of his, published twenty years later—Letters of Fraternity—Oxford Statute in restraint of the Mendicants—Interference of Parliament—Wiclid presented to the Rectory of Fillingham, which

	PAGE
he exchanges afterwards for that of Lutgershall—Promoted to the Wardenship of Balliol College, which he resigns for the Headship of Canterbury Hall, founded by Archbishop Islip—His appointment pronounced void by Archbishop Langham—Wyclif appeals to the Pope, who ultimately ratifies Langham's decree—The Pope's decision confirmed by the Crown—Wyclif vindicated against the suspicion of being impelled by resentment to hostilities against the Papacy—The Pope revives his claim of homage and tribute from England—Edward III. lays the demand before Parliament, who resolve that it ought to be resisted—Wyclif challenged to defend the Resolution of Parliament—His reply to the challenge	73

CHAPTER IV.

1367—1377.

Petition of Parliament that Ecclesiastics should not hold Offices of State—Answer of the King—Probable effects of Wyclif's opinions respecting this question—His sentiments on the employment of the Clergy in secular offices—He becomes a Doctor of Divinity, and lectures on Divinity at Oxford—His Exposition of the Decalogue—Notice “of his Pore Caitiff”—Notice of the struggles of this country against Papal exaction—Papal <i>Provisions</i> —Statute of Provisors, and of Premunire—Wyclif sent as Ambassador to the Pope—Presented to the Prebend of Aust and the Rectory of Lutterworth—Wyclif summoned to appear before the Convocation at St. Paul's—He is protected by John of Gaunt—His appearance at St. Paul's—The tumultuous scene which followed—Death of Edward III., and accession of Richard II.—Further complaints of the Parliament against the Pope—Question, “whether the treasure of the kingdom might not be detained, although required by the Pope?”—Wyclif's opinion	108
---	-----

CHAPTER V.

1377—1379.

PAGE

Bulls issued by the Pope against Wiclif—Coldly received at Oxford—Wiclif appears at Lambeth before the Papal delegates—Violence of the Londoners—Message from the Queen Dowager—Wiclif's written answers to the charges—He is dismissed with injunctions to abstain from spreading his doctrines—His conduct on this occasion considered—His reply to the <i>maxim theologus</i> —His views with regard to Church Property—In what sense he considered the possessions of the Church as <i>Alms</i> —His dangerous sickness—He is visited by several of the Mendicants, who exhort him to repentance—His Answer	135
---	-----

CHAPTER VI.

1379—1381.

Origin of the Papal Schism—Wiclif's “Schisma Papæ”—His Treatise on the truth and meaning of Scripture—His Postils—Wiclif as a Parish Priest—Picture of the Clergy of that age from his tract, “How the office of Curate is ordained of God”—Wiclif's translation of the Scriptures—Elucidarium, Bibliorum, or Prologue, &c. not the work of Wiclif—No complete version before Wiclif's—Question of appeal to private judgment—Wiclif's defence of the translation of the Scriptures—His version proscribed by the Church, but nevertheless widely circulated—Insurrection of the Peasantry—Causes assigned for it by Papal writers—its real cause, probably, the wretchedness and degradation of the peasantry—Possibly aggravated by the growing impatience of Ecclesiastical power—Injustice of ascribing it to the religious opinions of Wiclif and his followers	150
--	-----

CHAPTER VII.

1381—1382.

PAGE

Wiclif hitherto employed in exposing the corruptions of the Papacy—He now engages in the Sacramental Controversy—Notice of the history of this question—Pascasius Radbert—Bertram, and Johannes Scotus—Bengarius—Transubstantiation established by Innocent III.—Metaphysical explanation of it by the Mendicants—This doctrine unknown to the Anglo-Saxon Church—Probably introduced into England at the Conquest—Wiclif attacks the doctrine from the chair of theology—His positions denounced, on pain of excommunication—He resolves to appeal to the King—He is desired by John of Gaunt to abstain from the subject—Courtney succeeds to the Primacy—Synod held by him at the Preaching Friars' in London—The Assembly disturbed by an Earthquake—Address and self-possession of Courtney—Twenty-four Conclusions, ascribed to Wiclif, condemned—Measures taken for the suppression of his Doctrines—Petition of the Spiritual Lords against the Lollards—Royal Ordinance, empowering Sheriffs to arrest and imprison the Preachers of false doctrine—It is introduced into the Parliament Roll without the consent of Lords or Commons—Further proceedings of the Primate—Wiclif himself not yet summoned before the Archbishop—Wiclif's complaint to the King and Parliament—Petition of the Commons against the Ordinance for the suppression of erroneous doctrine—Wiclif summoned to answer before the Convention at Oxford—He is abandoned by the Duke of Lancaster—He maintains his opinions—He delivers in two Confessions, one in English, the other in Latin—His English Confession—His Latin Confession—He is banished from Oxford—He retires to Lutterworth—He is summoned by the Pope to appear before him—His answer	182
---	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

1382—1384.

PAGE

Continued labours of Wiclif in his retirement—Crusade for Urban VI. under the command of Spencer, Bishop of Norwich—Its failure—Wiclif's "Objections to the Freres"—He condemns the Crusade—His opinions respecting the lawfulness of wars—He conceives his life to be in danger from his enemies—His death—His character—Traditions respecting him at Lutterworth—His preferments—Wiclif not a political Churchman—His unwearied energy—Probable effect of the scholastic discipline on his mind—alleged coarseness of his invectives—Prevalence of Wiclif's doctrines at Oxford after his death—The testimonial of the University, in honour of his memory, in 1406—Question of its authenticity considered—Persecution of Wiclif's memory by the Papal writers—Prevalence of his opinions in Bohemia—His remains disinterred by a decree of the Council of Constance	210
---	-----

CHAPTER IV.

WICLIF'S OPINIONS.

Wiclif charged by some with Pelagianism, by others, more justly, with the doctrine of Predestination—His Predestinarian notions chiefly confined to his Scholastic Writings—Pilgrimage and Image-worship—Purgatory—Auricular Confession and Papal Indulgences—Excommunication and Papal Interdicts—Papal power and supremacy—Episcopacy—Priests—The Church—Church visible and invisible—The Sacraments—Baptism—Confirmation—Penance—Ordination—Matrimony—The Eucharist—Extreme unction—Celibacy of the Clergy—Fasting—Ceremonies—Church Music—Charms and judicial astrology—Notions

	PAGE
imputed to Wiclif that God must obey the Devil, and that every creature is God—Dominion founded on Grace, how understood and explained by Wiclif—Wiclif's opinions as to the power of the State over Church Property—Wiclif considers Church Endowments as inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity—Tithes represented by him as Alms—Wiclif's services, as preparatory to the Reformation—Notion of the Reformation, as it would probably have been effected by him—The belief prevalent in his time that Satan was loosed—Its probable influence on his views and opinions	236

CHAPTER X.

Wiclif's Poor Priests—Wiclif's tract, "Why Poor Priests have no Benefices," <i>viz.</i> 1. Their dread of Simony—2. Their fear of mis-spending the goods of poor men—3. That Priests are obliged to preach, whether beneficed or not—John Aston—John Purney—William Swinderby—William Thorpe—Nicolas Hereford—Philip Repingdon—Richard Fleming—Knighton's representation of Wiclif's followers—The fanatic John Ball, not a Disciple of Wiclif—the Insurrection of the Peasantry falsely ascribed to Wiclif and his followers—Attributed by the Commons to the oppression of the Peasantry—Encouragement afforded to Wiclif by the great—Edward III.—Johanna, Queen Dowager—John of Gaunt—Anne, Queen of Richard II.—Richard II.—Various Noblemen and Knights—Lord Cobham	280
---	-----

CHAPTER XI.

Proceedings against the Wyclifites—Petition to Parliament on the part of the Lollards—Turbulence of the Lollards—King Richard II. requested to return from Ireland to the Succour of the Church—He returns accordingly, and menaces the patrons of Lollardism—Letter of Pope Boniface IX.—Certain positions of Wiclif condemned at Oxford—Statute de Heretico Comburendo—Proceedings	
--	--

PAGE

of Archbishop Arundel—Continued violence of the Lollards—Law, compelling all persons in Civil office to take an oath against Lollardism—Inquisitorial Constitution of Archbishop Chicheley—Effect of these severities—Bishop Pecock writes against the Lollards—He defends the Bishops—His “Repressor”—His “Treatise of Faith”—He censures the preaching of the Mendicants—He maintains the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and questions the prudence of relying on the infallibility of the Church—For these opinions he is forbidden the King’s presence, and expelled from the House of Lords—He is convened before the Archbishop for heresy—Abjures—Is imprisoned for life in Thorney Abbey—Persecution of the Lollards renewed under Henry VII.—Martyrdom of Joanna Baughton—Martyrdom of Tylsworth—Bishop Nix—Inhumanity towards those who abjured—These cruelties eventually fatal to the Papacy in England	310
Notice of the Writings of Wiclf	330
APPENDIX	333

LIFE OF WICLIF.

INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

General View of the gradual corruption of Christianity, to the middle of the fourteenth century.

IT has been truly remarked that Christianity is a jewel of inestimable and unchangeable value; but that the *setting* of it has always depended, more or less, upon the vicissitudes of the public taste, or feeling, or knowledge. And it is one melancholy office of ecclesiastical history to exhibit the strange varieties exhibited by human passion, and secular interest, in the engraving and the use of this precious gem. In the first place, the wisdom of this world was speedily at work upon it; till its own unsullied brightness was partially dispersed and broken amidst the glitter of earth-born philosophy. And next came the “pride of life,” to mingle the false splendours of the world with the lustre of the *costly stone*. And lastly, to crown the abuse, ambition seized upon it, and fixed it to her diadem: so that, from the front, where *righteousness unto the Lord* should alone have been written, an angry blaze was, for ages, seen to issue, more like a consuming fire, than the flame of celestial truth.

Thoughts like these may, naturally enough, rush into the mind of any one, who should expect of the Christian revelation that it would be like the word of God, when he said, *Let there be light, and there was light*; and that, when the command went forth, the light would, at once, be divided from the darkness. That, however, is but a shallow philosophy, which would lead us to imagine that the operations of the Deity upon the moral chaos of this world, must needs resemble those of the Spirit, which once brooded over the confusion of its material elements. The notion, however, is one which may, perhaps, be blamelessly suggested by a high and reverential estimate of God's omnipotence, and by a feeling of pious impatience for the consummation of his gracious designs: and the proper corrective of it is, not to disguise the various discouraging phenomena which the case undoubtedly presents to us; but, rather, after a candid and courageous exposition of them, to recall the thoughts of the inquirer to other considerations; and so to remind him that, when we are studying the history of God's Church, we are meditating on the dealings of him, *with whom a thousand years are but as a single day*. With this caution upon our minds, we may venture briefly to survey the progress of those changes which have come over the Church since the time of its first planting. And this survey is now more especially needful; seeing that, of late, we have witnessed the appearance of a disposition rather to hail those changes as natural and legitimate expansions of the germ of primitive truth, than to deplore them as disfigurements and corruptions of it.

Foremost among the dangers which beset Chris-

tianity, was that which arose from its inevitable contact with Paganism. Both the schools of philosophy, and the regions of vulgar superstition, were pervaded by elements, at mortal variance with the simple essence of Christianity. From the wisdom of the heathen world the new religion had, accordingly, to encounter either the peril of fierce opposition, or the still more dangerous offer of coalition and alliance. If the philosophy of the age were unequal to a conflict with the truth of God, she might, at least, endeavour to hold divided empire with the truth ; and, with this view, would naturally be induced to stretch forth to her the right hand of fellowship. The result of this was, that the faith of Christ was in danger of being gradually transformed into the likeness of a human science, wherein the intellect of man might boldly and freely take its pastime. The endless and multiform brood of heresies, engendered in the earliest period of the Church, were, in truth, no other than the produce of all the philosophical and religious systems in the world, thrown into startling combinations, by the infusion of one new ingredient more powerful than them all. And, even when the turbulence of that conflict had, in some degree, subsided, peace still appeared to be as remote as ever from the Christian world. The spirit of discord had been let loose, and it entered into Christian theology ; and the result was, that the Trinity and the Incarnation,—themes the most awful and stupendous that can engage the mind of man,—were tossed from mouth to mouth, and from pen to pen, as if they had been flung from heaven to earth, merely to exercise the wit of mortals, and to inflate their arrogance, and

to kindle their passions—instead of bringing down their high thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

But, if the *philosophy and vain deceit* of Paganism were injurious to the simplicity which is in Christ, equally infectious were the seductions of its brilliant ritual and imaginative mythology. With these elements of corruption Christianity was every where surrounded. The genius of Heathenism was ever at hand to convert the religion of the Saviour to its own likeness: so that if an Apostle had revisited the earth at the end of four or five centuries from the period of his ministry, and had looked at nothing but the outward and visible form of the Christian Church, he might have been tempted to fear, that the truth, for which he had laboured and bled, had been transformed into a sort of mystic pageantry,—its painful Evangelists into pompous actors—its places of worship into splendid theatres. The change which actually had taken place, may be imaged to our thoughts by the remark, that, in primitive and apostolic times, the chalices were of wood, and the ministers of gold: but that now the Church was content with golden chalices and wooden priests! This, probably, is one of those complaints, in which truth has been partially sacrificed to the point and vigour of the saying. But, after all allowance for exaggeration, it will still remain unquestionable, that the clergy had grievously declined from their *first works*, and had begun to emulate, at least in external appearance, the follies of the world around them. That the public service of God should be honoured by all sober, impressive, and even costly solemnity, has

never, indeed, been questioned, save by the vulgarest spirit of fanaticism. And, we may well believe that it was a fervid zeal for the glory of his name, which *originally* sought to render the Christian worship honourable in the sight of the heathen. Nay, more; it scarcely can be doubted that, even apart from the seductions of “a gay religion, full of pomp and gold,” the exterior of Christian devotion must, inevitably, in the course of time, have assumed a form more or less expressive of the grandeur of that internal reality which it visibly embodied. But still, no reasonable theory of expansion or development can ever account for the extent to which the gaudy frivolities of Paganism were mimicked, and sometimes outdone, by the Church of the fourth or fifth century. It is idle to affirm that she did but assimilate, and sanctify to her own use, the apparatus which before had been abused by the lying spirit of idolatry. The phenomena can never be made to bend to any such hypothesis. They point to nothing less than a gradual and most unworthy compromise of Christian simplicity. The clergy, in the splendour of their apparel, may be said to have well-nigh “beggared the pomp of Aaron’s wardrobe, and the Flamen’s vestry.” Their official raiment blazed with gold and purple, and *needlework of divers colours*. Almost every object in the creation was pourtrayed upon their garments. The more devout among them, indeed, carried scriptural histories emblazoned on their backs; but, even so, their appearance has been compared to that of painted walls. All this outward magnificence was thought to correspond to the sacredness, it may almost be said to the

divinity, which now began to gather round the sacerdotal character; and yet he, whose "lips of gold" proclaimed most lavishly the exalted dignity of the priesthood, himself declares that, in his days, the life and soul of piety had fled from the scenes of their holy ministrations. "How awful," he exclaims, "is the picture of the primitive Church exhibited by the Apostle! The Church then was heaven upon earth. The Spirit then ruled in all things. He moved the hearts of those who presided, and filled them with the Divinity; but now we have nothing left but the shadow of these glorious things. The Church now resembles a decayed matron, who has nothing to exhibit but the symbols and indications of her former wealth; the cabinets and the caskets that contained her jewels, and her gold, and her precious things. Not only have the miraculous gifts been withdrawn from her, but virtue and devotion have fled from the sanctuary. In former days every house was a church; but now the church is no better than a house: nay, many a private house exhibits a scene of order and peace which is a sore rebuke to our places of solemn assembly. The house of God is now a scene of tumult and confusion, which incessantly reminds us of the place of traffic and exchange. The laughter and uproar is such as we hear at the public baths and open market-places. We seem to forget that the church is not a place for idle concourse, or worthless recreation, or worldly business or employment; but that it is the haunt of angels, the realm of the Almighty himself,—another heaven. . . . The temple is now more like a theatre than a place of religious service and devotion. It shows quite as prodig-

gal a display of the vanities and seductive artifices of dress and decoration. It is chosen as the most commodious spot for licentious intrigues. More bargains are made there, than at the tables of the money-changers. More business is transacted there, than at the usual resorts of trade and commerce. If you wish for the best opportunity of hearing or circulating slander, seek it—not in the usual places of concourse—but in the church. If you are curious about private concerns, or political intelligence, go not to the camp, or to the courts of justice, or to the chambers of the physicians: the church is the place in which the retailers of such matters are always to be found. In short, the spot on which we are now assembled is any thing but a church. Are these abuses and abominations to be endured¹?" And yet, at the very time when the spiritual degeneracy called forth these complaints and denunciations, the ecclesiastical rites and offices were supposed to possess a supernatural solemnity and power. "Look," says the golden preacher again, "look at that awful table. Recollect why it is placed there. The very sight of a king's throne causes us to rise and do it reverence. Tremble, then, at the spectacle before you. Lift up your heart to heaven, before the moment arrives which shall draw aside the veil that covers those venerable mysteries, and disclose a band of angels advancing before the presence of their King. The very catechumens, who have not received initia-

¹ Chrysost. Hom. xxxvi. in 1 Cor. xiv. 33, vol. x. p. 339—341, ed. Bened. What I have given above is a free but faithful version of the preacher's declamation.

tion, can yet understand that, when a prophet or minister of God addresses them, they are in the presence of Jehovah himself, and that their souls should therefore be lifted up from earth. What! shall the vile antics, and the worthless jests of players, and mimics, and harlots, be honoured with breathless and unbidden silence ; and shall the message of the Lord of heaven be received with scorn ? When he speaks to us of things so stupendous, shall we put on a hardy impudence, which would almost disgrace the brutes ?" In our perusal of passages of this stamp, abundant allowance must, of course, be made for the fervency and indignation of the preacher : and there would be neither charity nor wisdom in making his language the measure by which the Christian stature of a whole generation is to be ascertained. Nevertheless, it is quite impossible that words, like those which have been cited, should have found utterance in any period, but one of serious decline from the purity of ancient days ; and they are amply confirmed by the censures of other writers, and by the canons of the Church. All this testimony combines to show that the priesthood had been gradually contracting the semblance of a worldly profession, at least in those parts of the empire where grandeur, and wealth, and luxury, were predominant ; that the genius of Paganism had long been spreading its own fantastic embroidery over the simple and seamless vesture of Christianity ; and, not only so, but was beginning to mix up its palatable venom with her sacred and living waters.

As nothing can be more deeply interesting than to watch Christianity in its state of *transition* from

simplicity to depravation, it will scarcely be considered as an impertinent digression, if I solicit the attention of the reader to another burst of the great Christian orator's impassioned eloquence ; evidently prompted by feelings of the same kindred with those, which, in after-ages, filled the world with reliques, and wearied it with pilgrimages. In his thirty-second Homily on the Epistle to the Romans, there is a highly-wrought encomium on the character of St. Paul². The following is the substance of the most striking portion of it. “ The voice of St. Paul was like the cherubim of the mercy-seat. Jehovah rested on the tongue of the Apostle, as he did on the forms of those celestial virtues. Its utterance soared to seraphic heights ; for what could the voice of a seraph pronounce more sublime than the exclamation, ‘ *I am persuaded that neither angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ.* ’ Would I could behold the dust that formed that mouth, by which Christ spoke of such unutterable things, and by which the Spirit delivered his wondrous oracles to the world. For who shall tell the marvels which that mouth accomplished ? It expelled demons—absolved sins—silenced monarchs—sealed up the tongues of philosophers—brought over the world to God—won barbarians to the study of wisdom—changed the whole frame and proportion of things on earth—and ordered at will the things which are in heaven, according to the

² Ed. Bened. vol. ix. p. 758, 759.

mighty power that wrought within him. *Would that I could behold the dust of that heart*, which might truly be called the heart of the whole world—the fountain of blessings without number—the elemental principle of our very life (for the spirit of life was thence dealt forth to all, and was divided to all the members of Christ); that vast and mighty heart, which embraced whole cities and nations; which was exalted above the heavens, and was larger than the earth; which was brighter than the sun, and firmer than adamant; that heart which was the tablet of the Spirit, and the book of heavenly grace.—*Would I could behold the dust of those hands* which were galled with fetters, those hands by the imposition of which the Spirit was dispensed, and from which the viper fell into the flame; *would I could see the dust that formed those eyes* which were so illustriously blinded, and which, for the salvation of the world, were soon restored to light; those eyes which looked on earthly things, but saw them not, and which beheld the things that are invisible. *Would I could gaze upon the dust of those feet*, which made the circuit of the earth, yet knew no weariness. *Would that I could see the sepulchre*, where those arms of righteousness and light are now laid up; *those limbs* which are now alive, but which, while he survived, were dead; those limbs which were crucified to the world, and in which Christ alone could be said to live. *Would that I could look upon the ruins of that frame* which was the temple of the Spirit; *of that body*, which, to this hour, girds the great city that contains it, with a defence more indestructible than the strength of wall or bulwark.—

And would that we might not think upon him merely with veneration and astonishment, but fervently imitate his holiness, that we might be worthy hereafter to behold him, and to be made partakers of his unutterable glory." Surely the man who could write this, would willingly have gone a pilgrimage to the ends of the earth, to look upon the remains, which his imagination and his heart did all but worship. In passages such as this, we may behold, in its highest and purest region, the action of that same principle which, when it descended among lower natures, engendered little but absurdity and extravagance.

It is evident, then, that, at this period, a process had commenced, which, being continued through a long series of ages, tended to make Christianity appear unlike to her original self. So that some have not scrupled to assert that, what was still called the religion of Jesus, had become, in fact, a sort of disguised Paganism; differing from the ancient and classic superstitions in little else but a new nomenclature, and an artful change of certain exterior attributes. But representations, such as these, are clearly the result of superficial views and irreverent habits of thought. To estimate the true and vital power of Christianity requires a deeper insight into its history. Can any one, for instance, look upon the work which had been wrought in the earlier ages of the Church, and yet fail to discern the *goings forth* of the Spirit of God? Can it be denied that the Gospel had gone abroad, "in the irresistible might of weakness," *conquering and to conquer?* Within a moderate space from the day of Christ's ascension, it had been

preached to three continents, and began to fill with believers the forum and the camp of the Pagan world. Three centuries had scarcely elapsed, when it had been heard to the very ends of the civilized globe : and in little more than four, the ancient superstitions had well-nigh crumbled into dust before it. And then, what shall we say to its moral triumphs over the passions and the fears which hold mankind in bondage ? What shall we say to the miracles of constancy and devotion which illustrate the primitive annals of the Church ? Can the changes which it wrought, and the victories which it achieved, be paralleled in the history of man ? The scorner may point to the lordly prelates of imperial capitals ; to Paul of Samosata, to Damasus of Rome, to George the Cappadocian. We will turn our eyes to the spiritual fathers of obscure and remote provinces, whose sanctity and whose simplicity were as a *burning and a shining light* to their people. The infidel and the Sadducee may direct the finger of contempt to the iniquitous or dissolute lives of those, who named the name of Christ in the midst of luxury, and splendour, and worldliness. We seek for the glories of the Christian faith in scenes of domestic purity and quiet. We may be told of the schisms and the heresies which tore all Christendom to pieces, and verified at least one prophecy of our Lord, that he came not to send peace on earth, but that he came to send a sword. Our consolation is to be found in the belief, that God had almost innumerable faithful ones, who dwelt in serenity and peace below those regions of turbulence. The warfare of theology might be raging, as it were, round the heights,

and the people of the valleys might frequently hear the sound thereof, and yet be unable to tell whence it came or whither it went: and we are accordingly assured that, amid the wildest tumults of controversy, the ears of the populace were often more innocent and holy than the hearts of their teachers³. A more unrighteous perversion can scarcely be imagined, than to estimate the influences of Christianity by the *phases* which it wears, when examined through the turbid atmosphere of national and political history. No other institution could endure so iniquitous a test. The annals of the world, we are perpetually reminded, exhibit little else than a register of folly and of crime; and, to our sight, the tragedy often deepens as civilization advances, as human interests become more complicated, as human arts advance towards maturity, and as governments expand into activity and power. And yet, what should we say to one who persisted in affirming that governments are merely agents of destruction, and that the advancement of science or of art is nothing more than the development of principles, which tend to national decay and dissolution? In spite of all this collision of elements, man continues to derive transcendent benefits from the expansion of his social energies, and the growth of his civil institutions; although history may present to our view little else than the boiling foam which is thrown up by the fermentation. And why should a different test be applied to the leaven which has been mercifully cast into the mass of our

³ *Sanctiores sunt aures plebis quam corda sacerdotum*, are the words of Hilary.

degenerate nature? Let us look beneath the surface; let us not weary ourselves by watching the fierce agitation of the process; but rather let us gratefully fix our thoughts on the purity and the refinement which, in God's good time, will assuredly be the result⁴.

In adverting, however, to the struggles of Christianity against the corruptions of human nature, it is, of course, needless to disguise the danger she had incurred in the conflict. So great has that danger appeared to some, that it has led them to doubt whether a tempestuous convulsion were not absolutely needed to preserve within her an element of health, or purity, or even of life. Questions like these no human wisdom can venture confidently to decide. Thus much, however, is certain, that,—at length, the convulsion actually came. All the mounds and barriers of ancient power had long been giving way; till, at last, the deluge burst from the regions of the east and north. The great deep of human population appeared to be broken up; and, for a long period, the waters prevailed with such exceeding fury, that the whole fabric of the empire was carried before them, and little was left of it but a pile of shapeless ruins. Had these convulsions occurred before the strength of the Church had been consolidated, they must, according to all human judgment, have swept it from the face of the earth. But God, who is faithful, had remembered his promise.

⁴ The reader who may be desirous of seeing the force of Christianity, as a progressive scheme, powerfully exhibited, should consult Mr. Rose's publication on that subject, as *Christian Advocate*, for the year 1829.

The days of trouble and ruin were mercifully delayed, till Christianity had long pervaded and possessed nearly the whole mass of civilized society ; so that nothing short of extermination could then have destroyed it. But, although the Church survived the havoc of those dreadful visitations, strange and perplexing were the appearances with which it emerged out of the chaos ! From the very midst of the ruins, a portentous form was seen to arise, such as the world had never looked upon ; an apparition habited in the robes of priesthood, and surrounded by attributes of majesty ; holding in one hand the rod of worldly power, and in the other the flaming sword, which turned every way, to guard the citadel of spiritual dominion. For ages together, did this stupendous phantom continue to spread out before the astonished gaze of mankind, till its feet seemed to rest upon the earth, while its head was towering among the stars.

And where, it may be asked, was the power which called up this mysterious shape of sovereignty ? Was the dominion, which then appeared, no other than a development of the kingdom which is not of this world ? Was it not, rather, the creature of that same spirit which impelled the Israelites of old to desire for themselves a king, like unto all the nations ; when the Lord their God was, himself, their king ? The weakness of men called for support, their calamities for succour and protection : and for these they were unable to put their trust in an unseen, and, as they thought, an absent Ruler. An invisible Theocracy was a thing too spiritual for their gross and unripened faith. And hence it was that the mind of

Christendom became more and more familiar with the notion of an empire which should visibly combine the spiritual with the secular dominion. It would be erroneous to consider the Papacy as a mighty scheme of imposture and despotism, constructed according to a regular design delivered down from one generation of deceivers to another. It grew up, a man scarcely can tell how. The moral helplessness of an ignorant and semi-barbarous world disposed men to resort, for guidance, to one central oracle of truth: while the confusion and anarchy of the west seemed likewise to demand the centralization of the temporal authority. Accordingly, the chambers of superstition and the towers of strength rose up gradually together: till, at length, they grew into a structure more vast and menacing than could ever have been projected, in the wildest mood of ambition, by the men of any single generation.

Never, perhaps, since the world began was there a power which seemed to unite within itself so many elements of weakness, as the Papacy. The sovereigns were usually aged men when they ascended the chair of St. Peter, and consequently their reigns were brief. Every pontiff was an insulated individual, united by no ties of kindred to those who went before, or to those who followed after. The elective conclave was a scene of eternal rivalry, intrigue, and conflict. And yet did this rope of sand, as it must have appeared to ordinary eyes, coalesce into such an union of strength and flexibility, that it was able to twine itself round the mightiest of mankind, to bind kings, as it were, with chains, and nobles with fetters of iron. It is scarcely possible to account for this strange

example of strength made perfect in weakness, otherwise than by supposing that the secret of the Papal influence lay in the public mind and will of Christian Europe, and in the exigencies and defects of the whole social system during the period of its growth. The pontifical power and supremacy formed, in fact, a sort of universal sanctuary, the only refuge which then existed, from the savage turbulence and coarse despotism of the Middle Ages. The Papacy itself was, indeed, a gigantic abuse; but then it had the incidental merit of occasionally controlling other abuses and enormities, which threatened to tear the whole structure of society to pieces. To the Papacy the world was indebted for the *truce of God*; which afforded to the inoffensive and the feeble four nights out of the seven in which they might hope to sleep in peace. Again, the chair of St. Peter formed the only tribunal which could place a curb in the jaws of lordly oppression and rapacity. The tribunal, it is true, was itself often so mercenary and perfidious, as to extort even from Anselm the remark, that Rome had no justice save for those who were able to pay largely for it. But still, the headlong march of violence was, at times, retarded by the very necessity of resorting to the spiritual judicature; and princes were kept in constant remembrance of a power superior to their own. It may, indeed, be no pleasing spectacle to see great potentates at the bridle or the stirrup of a churchman: but though our indignation may be kindled at the recollection of such scenes, our emotions may well be mitigated by the thought, that in those wretched times the people were eaten up, as it were bread; and that no hope seemed to

remain for them but in the supreme authority of God's vicegerent. Once more, it is astounding to behold all Europe precipitating herself upon the East, and draining out her life-blood and her treasure at the call of an imperious hierarchy, and the preaching of a fanatical monk. But here, again, it should be kept in mind, that, in the judgment of many thoughtful men, this upheaving of the energies of Christendom was not without its use, in helping to roll back the flood which the fury of Islamism had let loose upon the Eastern world ; and which, if not arrested, might have swept religion and humanity from the regions of the West.

These are considerations which may warrant the reverential surmise, that the thoughts of God towards his Church were not wholly thoughts of evil, when he permitted the Papacy to grow up into such colossal grandeur. We cannot, without violence to our judgment or our faith, shut out from our minds the notion of some especial providential agency, compelling this giant usurpation to work out many useful and beneficent results. There is something grand, nay, almost superhuman, in the spectacle of a purely mental supremacy, controlling the mutinous elements of society during the wildest periods of barbarism, and often potently interfering to prevent their falling into ruinous and exterminating conflict. And then, too, it should never be forgotten, that this same power was, in effect, the sole guardian of intelligence, the sole protector and preserver of literature, in those days of Egyptian darkness. The man is not to be envied, who can reflect, without emotions of gratitude to God's never-failing providence, on those

various and noble foundations, which, although they may, in time, have degenerated into haunts of profligacy, formed, nevertheless, the only retreats of learning, civilization, and charity, during a dreary interval of general ignorance and brutality⁵. It

⁵ “It is impossible,” says Mr. Maitland, “to get even a superficial knowledge of the mediæval history of Europe, without seeing how greatly the world of that period was indebted to the monastic orders; and feeling that, whether they were good or bad in other matters, monasteries were beyond all price, in those days of misrule and turbulence, as places where (it may be imperfectly, yet better than elsewhere) God was worshipped,—as a quiet and religious refuge for helpless infancy and old age, a shelter of respectful sympathy for the orphan maiden and the desolate widow,—as central points, whence agriculture was to spread over bleak hills, and barren downs, and marshy plains, and deal its bread to millions perishing with hunger and its pestilential train,—as repositories of the learning which then was, and well-springs for the learning that was to be,—as nurseries of art and science, giving the stimulus, the means, and the reward, to invention, and aggregating around them every head that could devise, and every hand that could execute,—as the nucleus of the city which, in after days of pride, should crown its palaces and bulwarks with the towering cross of its cathedral. This, I think, no man can deny. I believe it is true, and I love to think of it. I hope that I see the good hand of God in it, and the visible trace of his mercy that is over all his works. Let me thankfully believe that thousands of the persons, whom Robertson, and Jortin, and other such very miserable second-hand writers, have sneered at, were men of enlarged minds, purified affections, and holy lives; that they were justly reverenced by men,—and, above all, favourably accepted by God; and distinguished by the highest honour which He vouchsafes to those whom He has called into existence,—that of being channels of his love and mercy to their fellow-creatures.”—Maitland on the Dark Ages, pref. iv. v.

would be scarcely too much to affirm that the Papal Church, corrupt as it became, was no less than the ark, which preserved the moral and spiritual life of Christendom from perishing in the flood, that so long overspread the face of the earth. Even the most indignant *Protestantism* can hardly refuse to confess thus much,—that, foul as the Romish Church has been and is, it has been made instrumental in preserving the true Catholic doctrine, though under deep incrustations of error; and has been over-ruled to the purpose of continuing the true Church, and the true faith, so that the gates of hell have not prevailed against them.

But we must now turn to the darker side of the picture, which, alas! is but too well known to all. Among the cravings of our fallen nature, more especially in the cruder stages of society, is a positive appetite for pleasing illusions, and, withal, a strong desire to bring to an agreement the claims of God, and the indulgence of our peculiar tendencies and inclinations. And most prodigally did the mother and mistress of all Churches minister to the demands of every variety of human temperament. To this end most of her alleged developments appear to have been adapted with a strange and curious felicity. Ample and complete, indeed, was the apparatus which expanded itself around her, for the accommodation of all the various passions and most opposite propensities of man. We would not willingly exaggerate the artifices of her dominion: but we greatly fear that the following borrowed words, vehement as they are, present but too faithful a picture of the fabric, which, under her plastic hands, arose to

its perfection: "She had a chamber for ever natural faculty of the soul, and an occupation for every energy of the natural spirit. She there permitted every extreme of abstemiousness and indulgence, fast and revelry; melancholy abstraction and burning zeal; subtle acuteness and popular discourse; world-renunciation and worldly ambition; embracing the arts, and the sciences, and the stores of ancient learning; adding antiquity, and misrepresentation of all monuments of better times; and covering carefully, with a venerable veil, that only monument of better times, which was able to expose the infinite superstition."⁶ But this is not all. Not only did her sorceries "make the earth so drunk, that it reeled under our feet";⁷ but merciless was the use she made of her apparently unearthly powers. Of all her developments, none was so wonderful, or so tremendous, as her theory of religious persecution. In the application of that theory she scrupled not to bring into close alliance the loftiest and the basest natures; the stern inquisitor, consumed with burning zeal for the honour of the Church, and the brutal adventurer, athirst only for spoil and blood. And, accordingly, for centuries together, her dominion was almost one perpetual reign of terror. In the annals of Christendom we sorrowfully read, that of all the empires which the earth has ever seen or trembled at, the Papacy was the most ruthless, whenever it was left to the full manifestation of its genius. Its maxims of government had an uniformity, like that which distinguished the rule both of its republican

⁶ Irving, *Babylon, &c.* foredoomed, p. 236.

⁷ Hooker.

and imperial predecessor. The very life and soul of its policy, was to spare the submissive, and trample down the rebellious. If this principle was ever suspended, it never, for a moment, was forgotten or abandoned. It yielded to the pressure and obstruction of circumstances, just as the inundation yields to the impediments offered by the face of the country which it is laying waste. It wound round the base of the mountain and the headland, which its strength was unable to undermine or to overthrow ; and it held on its stealthy course to the provinces beyond, till the whole land was overwhelmed, and the summits of the hills disappeared beneath the flood. In this very faculty of yielding, lay the secret of its might. And all history bears a melancholy witness to the desolation which marked its course. The thirteenth century is disastrously memorable for the murderous crusade against the Albigenses. In the fifteenth, the annals of the Hussites, the Lollards, and the Moriscoes, were written in characters of flame and blood. The tragedy is still continued through the two following centuries, in the martyrology of the Reformers and the Huguenots. To name the Inquisition, is to summon up before the memory such prodigies of atrocity, as oppress and distract the heart, and almost cause it to despair of human nature. In the eighteenth century, indeed, the spirit of persecution shrunk and cowered, like a guilty thing, before the advancing light of civilization and intelligence. But to this hour, though bound in chains, it is ready, at any moment, to emerge again, should it be able to burst its fetters. Infallibility is the name which it still wears written on its vesture. In this,

it still hopes finally to conquer. In virtue of this it is, that the genius of Loyola has once more descended upon earth, to breathe the breath of life into remains, which, *in the eyes of the unwise*, had seemed to be consigned for ever to the dust. And this is the same voice which, in the hearing of the present generation, has denounced all religious toleration by the name of impiety, and has prohibited the circulation of the Scriptures, as it would prohibit blasphemy*.

The perversions which had deformed the Christian faith, were, of course, the growth of ages: but, as might have been expected, they did not every where prevail with the same intensity. For instance, in those retired and simple communities, which were furthest removed from the influences of the imperial hierarchy, the original faith was best guarded from violation and disfigurement. There seems, more especially, to be a very strong presumption in favour of the belief that the people of the valleys of Piedmont, known by the name of the Vaudois, had preserved, from a very early period, a far purer faith than that which was professed by the general body of Christendom. The history of this sub-alpine Christianity is enveloped in deep obscurity. There seems to be little doubt, however, of its connexion with a diocese ruled in the ninth century by the celebrated

* Every one must remember the protest of the Belgian clergy, in 1815, against religious toleration in the Netherlands; and the decree which some years since issued from the Vatican, declaring the dissemination of the Bible to be a pernicious and profane design. Every one, too, must be aware of the revival of the Jesuits, and of the zeal and activity of that order since its resurrection.

Claudius of Turin, who was among the foremost Iconoclasts of that period. He was advanced to the see in question in the year 823 ; and the earliest exercise of his authority was to order the images, and even the crucifix itself, to be cast out of all the churches where they might be found, and to be consigned to the flames. This daring reform was followed up by the composition of a treatise, in which he condemned not only the worship, but the use, of images, expressed his contempt for the veneration of relics, exposed the absurdity of visits to the tombs of departed saints, and pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and, not only so, but maintained various doctrines in direct opposition to the current orthodoxy of the age. The spiritual guidance of such a man would have a powerful tendency to arrest the progress of error and superstition, especially if exercised among a primitive and simple-hearted people. That the effect of his teaching and example was not transitory, may reasonably be inferred from the religious condition of the same people, at a later period, as indicated by a very remarkable document, of unquestioned authenticity, which may be regarded as a confession of their faith in the twelfth century. The relic in question is an ancient poem, called *La Nobla Leyçon*, containing a metrical abridgment of the history and doctrine of the Old and New Testament, in the original language of the country, and evidently compiled for the purpose of perpetuating among the people the principles of sound belief. The exact date of this very curious and valuable monument, can scarcely be ascertained with any satisfactory precision. It has been concluded from the opening

lines of it, that it was composed in the year 1100. The expressions, however, are of sufficient laxity to suit various periods within the twelfth century². But, however this question may be determined, it is still beyond all doubt that certain essential doctrines and principles of our Reformation will be found in this religious formulary, which concludes with an exposure of the gross “errors of the Papacy, the simony of the priesthood, masses and prayers for the dead, the impostures of absolution, and the abuses of the power of the keys¹. ” From that time to the present, the same opinions have been inflexibly maintained by these simple mountaineers ; who have borne a perpetual and heroic testimony to the faith of their fathers, in the midst of the most merciless persecutions.

Whether the antiquity of the creed recorded in this composition can be traced up to primitive or apostolic times, or whether it was an embodiment of the teaching of Claudius of Turin, or whether it was the produce of the twelfth century, are questions attended with more perplexity than will easily be un-

² “ Brethren give ear to a *noble lesson*.

One thousand and one hundred years are fully accomplished

Since it was written, “ *we are in the last times*. ”

It would, therefore, appear, that the *terminus*, from which the 1100 years are to be reckoned, may be fixed either at the birth of Christ, which is often alluded to in the New Testament, as the commencement of “ the last times,” or final dispensation ; or, at the date of any one of the various passages in the New Testament, in which the phrase—*the last times*—is found to occur.

¹ Leger, Hist. des Eglises Vaudoises.

ravelled. It has been usual to refer its origin to Peter Waldo, or Waldensis, as he is sometimes denominated, an opulent merchant of Lyons, who is said to have been driven to separation from the Romish Church by the perusal of the Gospels and other books of Scripture, which he had employed a certain priest to translate into French. It may, however, be a point of reasonable controversy, whether this person was the teacher or the disciple of the Piedmontese Christians : whether he did not rather derive from them the title of Waldensis, instead of marking them with his own appellation, as their original founder. In support of the former opinion it may fairly be alleged, that several Roman Catholic writers, virulently hostile to these people, have spoken of *heresy* as of an indigenous growth among these Alpine wildernesses. The extent and the *antiquity* of the Waldensian perversion, is a subject of perpetual complaint with the Papal authorities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. And if, to these considerations, we add the traditions uniformly prevalent among these uncorrupted shepherds ; their own confident claims of immemorial purity, in faith and doctrine ; their obscure and solitary abodes ; and their remoteness from the scene of pontifical splendour and despotism ; we shall find but little difficulty in the surmise, that the valleys of Piedmont may, from primitive, perhaps from apostolic times, have witnessed a more undefiled profession and practice of the Gospel, than can easily be found among the more degenerate communities of Christian Europe².

² I cannot but agree with Mr. Gilly, that "it is much more likely that a race of mountaineers, secluded from the world, should have preserved the purity and simplicity of the

It must not, however, be disguised that (even if the Vaudois are to be regarded as protesting, from the earliest times, by their practice and their faith, against the dominion and perversion of the Romish Church,) there still may be a doubt whether their protest carries with it the full weight and authority which belongs to a legitimate branch of the Church, invested with the sanctity of apostolical succession. Their *Noble Lesson* itself, we must remember, contains no mention either of the forms of ordination, or of the gradations of sacerdotal rank and office. An ancient manuscript, indeed, they have, relating to ecclesiastical discipline, claiming, among the privileges which God has given to his people, the right to choose their *governors*, and their priests, in their several offices, "according to the diversity of the work, in the unity of Christ, and conformably to the apostolic example,—*For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed:*" and, according to the same document, the ministers "having good testimonials, and being well approved of, are received with imposition of hands³." But there is a vagueness and laxity about these expressions, which leaves a shade of doubt still hanging over the succession and perpetuation of the sacred

primitive Church, than that they should *suddenly* become Scripture readers and reformers in the twelfth century, after having been overwhelmed in the darkness that prevailed in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries."—Waldensian Researches, p. 113.

³ Gilly's Waldensian Researches, p. 143.

order among them, and renders somewhat questionable their claim to the character of an Episcopal Church.

But, whatever may be their claims to immemorial antiquity, or unbroken apostolical succession, or perfect purity of doctrine,—there is one particular in which they stand unimpeached, even on the showing of their adversaries. The innocence of their lives is placed beyond all doubt, by the testimony of those very monkish writers, who execrate their rebellion against the power of the Church, and charge them with the presumption of preaching without a regular mission. The picture of their morals, given by Rayner, (himself originally an “heresiarch,” by his own avowal, but afterwards one of the bitterest persecutors of dissent,) may of itself be regarded as absolutely conclusive. “They are steady and modest in their manners ; they have no ostentation in their dress ; they use neither rich nor splendid apparel ; they decline commerce from their aversion to lies, oaths, and fraud, but live by the labour of their hands ; they do not amass wealth, but are contented with necessaries ; they are chaste and temperate, especially those of Lyons ; they do not frequent taverns, nor dances, nor other vanities ; they refrain from anger ; they are always working, learning, or teaching.” It is true that this testimony may be taken as embracing, generally, all those sectaries who were charged with a revolt from the dominant Church ; but it is also true, that it has a more emphatic reference to the men of Lyons ; and by that term this writer is usually understood to designate the Waldenses, con-

sidered by him as disciples of Peter Waldo, the celebrated reformer of that city.

What the “men of the valleys” were in Piedmont, the Albigenses may possibly have been in Languedoc, and the south of France; although it must be confessed that the name of these latter religionists has not been handed down to us with the same unsullied honours, as that of their Alpine brethren. It has been confidently affirmed, that the creed of these people was tainted with the monstrous errors of the Manichæan heresy: and the charge has been supported by a large body of contemporary evidence; and, more particularly, by the recorded acts of the inquisition of Thoulouse. That the extravagant principles of this strange theory were partially dispersed among the multitude of sects, which at this time were beginning to disturb the Church, appears almost beyond dispute. But it seems, likewise, clear, that, amidst the variety of error which is said to have chequered the motley surface of their belief, one peculiarity was common to them all; for, without exception, they protested against the exorbitant wealth and intolerable despotism of the Papal hierarchy. It will easily be perceived how grievously the mixture of Gnostic or Manichæan error, in the multiform creeds of these people, would disqualify them for an effectual conflict against the abuses they presumed to denounce. Their doctrinal perversions would enable the defenders of the Catholic faith to proclaim, with sufficient plausibility, that the gainsayers of the Papal supremacy were likewise open adversaries to the primitive truth; that the traitors to the Pontiff were, also, little better than rebels against God; that they, who set up their

own private judgment against the authority of St. Peter's chair, scrupled not to affirm a divided empire between the power of evil, and the Father of all goodness. To what precise extent these notions could justly be ascribed to the Albigenses, or the Cathari, or other reputed heretics of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, it would, at this day, be extremely difficult to decide; but it can scarcely be doubted, that they retained a sufficient amount of erroneous doctrine, to furnish their enemies with very formidable arms against them. In another, and much more creditable respect, however, they undoubtedly bore a very near resemblance to their Asiatic predecessors. A great part of the original Manichæans are represented to us, with all their extravagance, as a class of socially harmless mystics, or austere enthusiasts; and such, undoubtedly, were a very large portion among their European successors, in subsequent ages, by whatever multitude of names they may have been consigned to public execration by their persecutors.

But, even if the innocence of the misbelievers A. D. 1208. had been such as almost to purify the age in which they lived, they would, at that period, have been scarcely deemed worthy to exist. At the beginning of the twelfth century, the hounds of persecution were let loose upon them; and before the end of the same century, the very name of the Albigenses had well-nigh perished from the earth. It was the voice of Innocent III. which summoned the faithful to the work of extermination; and Simon de Montfort was named the leader of the crusade. And then the deluge of ruin burst upon the plains of Languedoc.

The warriors of the Cross performed unheard-of prodigies of courage and of butchery. "The land before them was as the garden of Eden; behind them, it was a desolate wilderness." The flame and the steel swept away the inhabitants and their dwellings, *from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city*. Nay, even the faithful *Catholics* themselves were not safe from the blind fury of the tempest; for, in the midst of the slaughter and the pillage, a voice was once heard to cry, "Let all be slain; the Lord will know his own."⁴ The tide of desolation held on its course, till the ancient and heroic house of Toulouse fell before it, so that *its place knew it no more*. And thus, alas! were the direst furies of man's depraved heart sent forth to vindicate the cause of God!

It has been stated above, that the persecution of these unhappy sectaries was inflamed by the cry, which charged them with the abominations of the Manichæan heresy. It will, therefore, be proper briefly to advert to the introduction of this ingredient into the Christianity of Europe. In the middle of the seventh century, we are told, there arose in the neighbourhood of Samosata, a sect of Christians, known, for whatever cause, by the name of Paulicians. Their origin is usually ascribed to the following circumstance. A Christian deacon, on his return from captivity in Syria, then in possession of the Mussulmans, was hospitably received by one Constantine, an obscure member of the Greek Church. He received from the gratitude of his guest a copy of the

⁴ This was, actually, the cry of a Cistercian monk, at the storming of Beziers, where heretics were slaughtered by thousands, and *Catholics* among them!

Greek Testament, which had then been sealed up by the Eastern Church from popular inspection. The perusal of this sacred volume converted Constantine into a zealous and indefatigable Reformer. His labours were rewarded by the fidelity of a numerous body of followers, collected partly from the Catholics, and partly, it is said, from the remnants of the Gnostic and Manichæan sects. The creed of the Paulicians (for such was the title by which they soon were designated) rejected many of the superstitions which then deformed the Catholic belief and worship; but this merit, if we are to believe their adversaries, was overpowered by their adoption of opinions, which violated the first principles of natural and revealed religion. They attempted to combine the doctrines of Zoroaster with those of Christ. They admitted the existence of two adverse powers, the conflicting authors of good and evil. The New Testament they ascribed to the Father of Mercies, while they despised and abhorred the Old, as a collection of absurd and impious fables; and attributed them to the folly of men, or to the malice of demons. Their detestation of images, at last, exposed them to the fury of the Empress Theodora. Her reign was rendered memorable by the sacrifice of the Paulicians; of whom, one hundred thousand are said to have perished "by the sword, the gibbet, and the flames." Oppression, in time, converted the inflexible heretics into desperate rebels. After the usual vicissitudes of heroic suffering and sanguinary vengeance, the course of events transplanted multitudes of them from Armenia to Thrace, from Thrace to Italy and France; and with them, the habit of

perpetual reference to the Law and the Testimony. Whatever may have been their doctrinal aberrations, they still acknowledged Scripture as the sole foundation of belief ; and they who deny that any remains of spiritual independence were then to be found in Europe, ascribe to these persecuted exiles, the accidental merit of scattering over the West, together with the tares of the Oriental heresy, the good seed of evangelical reformation.

Neither creeds, nor confessions, nor apologies, now remain, which might enable us to judge of the degree, in which the Paulicians were infected with the Manichæan perversion. The most express testimony on the subject is that of Petrus Siculus, who lived towards the end of the ninth century, and who had resided, for some time, as ambassador among the heretics. And yet, in spite of his opportunities of informing himself, the account he gives of their belief is such, as can scarcely be reduced to any semblance of consistency : for he tells us, on the one hand, that they most readily and earnestly anathematized the heresiarch Manes ; and on the other, that they still retained several of his most revolting absurdities. They affirmed, for instance, the existence of a benevolent, and a malignant Deity ; they rejected the sacrament of the Lord's Supper ; and they denied altogether the authority of the Old Testament. These prodigies of disbelief, if we are to give implicit credence to the statements of monkish annalists and inquisitors, they imported with them into Europe ; where they and their disciples became conspicuously detestable under the various titles of Catharists,

Picards, Paterins, and, more especially, of Albigenses.

Even if these hostile representations were to be admitted, they would bring before us nothing but what the usual course of persecution might easily account for. The spirit of intolerance had been on the wing for ages. It had been sweeping all dissent and resistance from the earth. And while the tempest was abroad, it was probable enough that the various forms of belief, whether sound or visionary, which were at all opposed to the established system of ecclesiastical power, would be driven to the same hiding-places for shelter against its fury. And, in that case, whenever the scriptural verity ventured forth again into the world, it could not be very surprising, if, together with it, there should emerge the apparitions of the Arian or Manichæan heresies. But, however this may be, it is impossible to admit the hypothesis which ascribes, chiefly, to the influx of these Asiatic separatists, the revival of a spirit of inquiry in Europe. It is true that, after the struggle of a thousand years, the work of spiritual conquest seemed to be well-nigh complete ; and that the West was sleeping, to all appearance, the deep sleep of obedience and conformity. But still, it is not to be credited that Europe contained, within herself, no principle of renovation. The principle, indeed may, possibly, have been awakened into earlier activity by the infusion of a restless element from another region. The Paulicians, recent from the smart, or the recollection, of inhuman persecution, may have spread throughout the provinces, to which they migrated, a

fiercer hatred of restraint. It may be probable that they threw into more turbulent combination the ingredients which they found still existing in their adopted country. But, to allow this, is very different from confessing ourselves debtors to them for our own emancipation, or investing them with the honours due to apostles of religious purity⁵.

It would be useless to load these pages with the uncouth names of that variety of sects, which began to swarm throughout Christendom at the period of these commotions, and which gives somewhat of a grotesque appearance to the ecclesiastical history of the darker ages; a list to which Popery is eternally pointing, as a record of the evils which spring from a violation of her sacred unity, and heaven-descended power. To enumerate them would, probably, be to reckon up, not so much the essential varieties of religious sentiment, as the varieties of individual temperament, and the peculiarities of individual character. The sects in question are, for the most part, distinguishable from each other only upon paper. In one particular, however, as we have already observed, the

⁵ On the perplexed and difficult questions, relating to the Vaudois, the Albigenses, and the Paulicians, the reader may consult the following works: Leger, *Histoire des Eglises Vaudoises*; Allix, *Remarks on the Ecclesiastical History of the Churches of Piemont*; Turner's *History of England*, part iv. c. ii.; Hallam's *Middle Ages*, part ii. c. ix.; Gilly's *Excursion to the Mountains of Piemont* (1824), and *Waldensian Researches* (1831); Peyran's *Historical Defence of the Waldenses* (1829); Gibbon's fifty-fourth chapter, on the Paulicians; M'Crie on the Reformation in Italy, and in Spain. In these he will either find the necessary information; or, at least, directions to the authorities in which the truth may be sought for.

resemblance between them all is singularly striking, namely, in their aspect of hatred towards the Papal domination. This it was that, in the eyes of Rome, gave to their physiognomy its peculiar deformity. Ridicule and sarcasm she could patiently endure, just as statesmen are indifferent about lampoons and caricatures, so long as they feel their power to be substantial and secure. With still more composure did she regard the aspirations of mystic piety, which occasionally were ascending from her sacred solitudes. The spirit which breathed in these retirements was often, indeed, at variance with the worldly temper that presided in her counsels. But, then, it was embodied in works sealed up against the general view, and open only to the eye of contemplative men. It therefore offered no public rebuke to her schemes of secular aggrandizement and dominion. Nay, more than this,—she could listen unmoved to the keenest words of remonstrance and reproof from the mouth of her own sons, provided that they challenged not her pre-eminence and majesty⁶. But when once the voice of

⁶ Witness the sermon delivered by Nicolas Orem, before the Pope Urban, in 1364, in which the preacher loudly and intrepidly denounces the vices and abuses of the Papacy, and calls for their correction, in order that God's mercy may return to the Church, and that her rebellious adversaries may be disarmed. "I think verily," he says, "that these many years there have not been so many and so despiteful hearts, and evil-willers, stout, and of such a rebellious heart against the Church of God, as be now-a-days. Neither be they lacking, that would do all they can against it, and lovers of new-fangle ness ; whose hearts the Lord haply will turn, that they shall not hate his people, and work deceit against his servants ; I mean against priests, whom they have now in little or no reputation at all, albeit many yet there be, through God's grace,

revolt was lifted up, strengthened, as it often was, by an appeal to the *Word of God*, she began to tremble for the stability of her rule ; and she straightway addressed herself to the work of chastisement with all the ferocity of terror and of pride. Some speculators on her history there are, who, in the contemplation of her enormities, have partially consoled themselves with the reflection, that they had, at least, the effect of suppressing a premature eruption of the spirit of liberty, which might have thrown the social system into confusion, and retarded the improvement of the human race. And, it can scarcely be questioned, that much was to be apprehended from the ignorant fanaticism which, sometimes, mixed itself with the movements of those gloomy times. It would be rash, however, to commit ourselves to speculation on the eventual usefulness of long continued error. Let us, therefore, turn from reasonings to facts. It appears beyond all doubt, that the noise of many waters begun, in those ages, to be heard in Christendom. The streams were then bursting forth from the subterraneous course, and the face of society was, in various directions, intersected by their channels. They continued gradually to combine their might ; till, at last, they bore down before them the bulwarks, whose strength and solidity had been the work of centuries. It remains for us to observe the tributary force, wherewith the intellect and the heart of England swelled the inundation.

good and godly. But as yet, the fury of the Lord is not turned away, but still his hand is stretched out. And, unless ye be converted, he hath bent his bow and prepared it ready."—Fox, p. 477.

INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER II.

View of Christianity in England, to the middle of the fourteenth century.

IN surveying the annals of Christianity in this country, it will, for all substantial purposes, be sufficient to begin with the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon Church. By whom the light of the Gospel was originally kindled in our land, it is now impossible to ascertain. That it shone in our *dark and cruel places* at a very early period, we learn from the voice of tradition; and Glastonbury would seem to be the spot which is best entitled to the honour of raising up the beacon flame. Its intensity, however, was by no means sufficient to overpower the hideous aboriginal superstitions of the country, or the more civilized paganism of its Roman conquerors. The classic mythology, indeed, gradually waned away, in Britain, together with the influence of her imperial protectors. But there is reason to believe that, as the Roman power decayed, the Druidical heathenism began to resume its strength, and to disfigure Christianity, where it could not actually destroy it. Of these vicissitudes, however, no authentic history is now to be found. With the exception of certain notices, chiefly of a fabulous or legendary character, we have scarcely any records of the early British Church.

The Saxon invasion brought with it the Tartaric idolatry of the North. The grim superstition of the Druids, the obsolete paganism of Rome, and the venerable forms of Christianity,—all were swept away before it. They retired, together with the Genius of British independence, to impenetrable retreats and mountain solitudes, and left the land as an heritage to the spirit of Odin : so that, for considerably upwards of a century, the Gospel was lost to the kingdoms of the Heptarchy. The blessing was restored by the zeal of Gregory the Great. The well-known accident which impelled him to the pious enterprise, is illustrative, at once, of the benignity of his heart, and the quaintness of his understanding. Before his elevation to the pontificate, he had seen a number of comely Saxon youths in the slave-market at Rome. Being struck with their appearance, and hearing that they were called *Angles*¹,—*Angels*, he exclaimed, they truly are, and ought to be joined to the angelic company. On being told that they came from the province of Deïra—Aye, *de irā*, indeed, said he ; *from the wrath* of God they must be plucked, and brought unto the grace of Christ. But his passion for quibbling was still unsatisfied. When he learned that *Ælla* was the name of their king,—Alleluiah ! he instantly cried out ; Alleluiahs must be chanted by them in the dominions of their sovereign. The design, which was expressed by all this solemn trifling, never dropped from his mind ; and when he was advanced to the throne of St. Peter, he despatched forty monks to England, for the execution

¹ The Latin forms,—*Angli*—*Angeli*,—make the quibble more intelligible.

of it. Augustine was the leader of this venerable mission ; and, most auspiciously for the enterprise, the Queen of Ethelbert, then King of Kent, was a Frankish princess, and passionately devoted to the Christian faith. Her influence accelerated the conversion of her semi-barbarian husband ; and, eventually, conferred upon her adopted country the blessings of a pure and humanizing religion.

Nothing can well be more impressive than the picture which has been left us of the opening of this missionary labour. It was in the year 600 that Ethelbert was apprized of the arrival in his dominions of certain strangers, habited in a foreign garb, and practising several unusual and mysterious ceremonies. Their object, as they stated, was to be admitted to the presence of the king, in order that they might communicate to him, and to his people, tidings of measureless importance to their everlasting welfare. The sacred embassy was received by him in the Isle of Thanet. He was surrounded by his nobles, and seated in the open air. He imagined, it would seem, conformably to an ancient superstitious notion, that the enchantments, which he, at first, apprehended from these awful persons, would be less formidable under the canopy of heaven, than within the walls of a building made with hands. The ministers of peace and sanctity approached in procession, bearing a silver crucifix, and a figure of the Saviour painted upon a banner, and chanting the solemn Litany of the Church. They then stated to him the object of their mission : and, having received from him a prudent, but favourable reply, were permitted to fix their residence at Canterbury, and to commence

at once the labours of conversion. And thus, at the opening of the seventh century, were laid the foundations of the Anglo-Saxon Church.

Under the protection of this powerful prince, the new religion advanced with a prosperous and rapid course. The rude heathenism of the Saxons gave way, in all directions, before it. Even the idolatrous priesthood, in many instances, set the example of conversion ; and it is related, that on the first preaching of the Gospel in Northumberland, the Saxon pontiff himself mounted a horse—which, to one of his order, was a dire abomination—and burst into the consecrated precinct, where, with his own hand, he hewed in pieces the idol, to whose service his former life had been devoted.

It would be foreign to the design of this work to trace minutely the progress of Christianity among our unlettered and half-savage ancestors. It may be sufficient to observe, that the chief obstructions it had to encounter, were rather from the coarse and licentious habits of the people, than from the stubbornness of the ancient superstitions. Surrounded by the ruins of Roman magnificence, they dwelt in hovels of plastered wicker-work, intent on nothing but the excitements of the chase, or the toils of military exercise. Their whole system of life, in short, at the period of their call to the profession of the Gospel, appears to have been not many degrees removed from a state of abject barbarism. That the religion of the Cross was embraced by them with true simplicity of spirit, may be reasonably concluded from the change which gradually stole over the rugged features of society, when once it was ex-

posed to these new and blessed influences. It is true that the contest between passion and principle among them, continued, for a long time, obstinate and violent. As might be expected, in that twilight of civility, their history often exemplifies, in a remarkable degree, the wild precipitation with which untutored minds can rush from one extremity to its furthest opposite. The lives of the same individuals frequently exhibited the darkest atrocities, followed by almost frantic self-infliction ; prodigies of rapine succeeded by an utter renunciation of the world ; licentious and brutal violence ending in vows of perpetual chastity. There was no vice so monstrous as to startle them in their career of self-indulgence ; no expiation severe enough to deter them, when once the season of repentance had arrived. By degrees, however, a milder spirit gradually insinuated itself into the social mass ; till, at last, the monastic system, with many of its evils, but with all its benefits, obtained a surprising predominance throughout the realm, and powerfully advanced the work of civilization. England, in fact, became, by degrees, almost a land of monasteries ; and kings were not ashamed to descend from the seat of dominion to the retirements of religious contemplation. The effect of this system was, to soften the asperities of savage life, to tame the passionate devotion to war and bloodshed, and to prepare the way for the formation of petty monarchies into one powerful and solid empire.

The spirit and energy of the Saxon Church was long kept up by its continued intercourse with Rome. The meagre literature of the country was invigorated and enriched by the learning and the talent of a long

series of foreign prelates, among whom, the name of Theodorus, the seventh Archbishop of Canterbury, stands nobly conspicuous. By birth he was a Greek; and by him the knowledge of his own magnificent language was introduced into this country. The northern provinces, indeed, although they maintained their intercourse with Italy, derived moral and intellectual improvement from sources peculiar to themselves. The names of Iona and of Jarrow will be illustrious, to the end of time, as sanctuaries of learning and of piety. The one was a solitary and barren rock in the Western Ocean; the other a monastery near the mouths of the Tyne. From these spots it was that the lights of literature and religion issued forth over the northern regions of our land. Such was the ardour of study, and such the holy rigour of discipline, which distinguished the monks of Iona, that their habitation was honoured as an island of saints. Of Jarrow, what more need be said, than that it fostered the virtues and the industry of the venerable Bede, and was the scene of his immortal labours? It was, indeed, unfortunate that "the infancy of English learning was supported by the dotage of the Roman" ; but still, the establishment of an institution such as Jarrow, and the appearance of a teacher such as Bede, in a country which, half a century before, was without an alphabet, are circumstances which can scarcely be paralleled in the history of man.

But at the time when England was struggling, with all the energy of heart and hope, to emerge from

² Burke.

ignorance and barbarism, she was thrust back again by the hand of a ferocious adversary. A deluge of sanguinary heathenism burst over her from the North : and she began to sink once more into degradation and misery. Her deliverance appears to us, at this day, almost as the work of one man. On the name of Alfred history has lavished all her resources of praise. Like the fabled Hercules of old, in him have centered the collective honours of institutions and achievements, the glory of which a more perfect knowledge of the times might, possibly, enable us to distribute with greater equity and credibility. But, after every reservation, enough would, doubtless, be left, to stamp him as nearly a miracle of wisdom, energy, and patriotism ; a benefactor such as Providence, in its mercy, sometimes raises up to rescue nations from despair. The Danes had torn his kingdom to fragments. He left it, at his death, in a state of integrity. In the eye of an historian of the Church, his name is eternally memorable, for the faithfulness with which he discharged the first of all those paternal duties, for which the *powers that be are ordained of God*. He laboured, both in his own person, and by munificence of encouragement and patronage, to restore and to protect the fallen religion of his country. He commanded personally in fifty-four pitched battles—he was the creator of the navy of Britain—he was the protector of her commerce—he was, himself, the life and soul of her public justice—he has been thought, by some, to merit the title of Founder of her constitution—he was the good genius of her literature and arts—and, lastly, he most eminently deserves the name of Nursing Father of

her Church. A third portion of his time was given up to the toils of study, and the exercises of piety. He translated works of devotion—he commenced a version of the Psalms—and his whole life appears to have been an example of the power of Christianity to take captive the highest faculties and noblest affections of man. And the whole of these wonders is rendered more overpowering by the circumstance, that they were achieved under the almost incessant pressure of severe bodily anguish. From early manhood his life was one perpetual disease, and was terminated at the age of fifty-two—after having crowded within its limits such wonders of useful exertion, as would seem to have demanded the days of an ancient patriarch, and the iron vigour of a Charlemagne.

Sorely would it have grieved the heart of this illustrious man, to look upon the tempest which soon began to lower over the country he had saved, and which burst forth, in the following century, with destructive fury. The evil angel, who first let loose the storm, was one whom the Romish calendar reckons among its saints. The name of Dunstan is popularly known among us by that extremely grotesque encounter, in which he is supposed to have extorted howls of anguish from the enemy of mankind. And, well would it have been for England, if he had been contented with the honours of this triumph. But he was an incarnation of the same spirit, which, in an age somewhat less barbarous, animated another renowned saint, the celebrated Thomas of Canterbury. In order to estimate the distractions he inflicted upon this kingdom, it will be necessary to

pause for a moment, and to consider the condition of the Saxon Church at the decease of Alfred, and in the succeeding age.

The discipline, which had been established by Augustine, was, of course, Episcopal, and the dioceses were, respectively, co-extensive with the kingdoms of the Heptarchy. Cathedrals and monasteries were built and endowed by the pious munificence of kings and nobles; but parochial divisions were as yet unknown. Among the earliest sources of maintenance for the Church, may be numbered the institution of tithes. This may be stated simply as a *fact*, without drawing us into controversy as to the precise nature and force of the obligation to their payment. The distribution of this fund was left to the bishop, and his brother presbyters; and was destined to the fourfold purpose of supporting the clergy,—repairing the church,—relieving the poor,—and providing hospitable entertainment for the pilgrim or the traveller.

At first, the religious instruction of every vicinity was administered by the perpetual missionary labours of the clergy attached to the cathedrals, under the direction and control of the bishop. To remedy the precarious nature of this supply, chapels and oratories were erected in every diocese; and, in time, the necessity of field worship was still more extensively superseded, by the foundation of parochial churches. This important change was not the effect of any sudden revolution: it was the gradual work of time; and was either dictated by the piety, or suggested by the convenience, of the landed proprietors, who were naturally desirous of the constant residence of a minis-

ter, to instruct their vassals in a religion which taught them the duties of industry and contentment. One consequence of it was, that, by an agreement with the bishops and their clergy, the endowment of tithes was transferred to the fixed place of worship, and vested solely in the local minister ; while the patronage of each church remained with the founder, and his representatives. It was a condition invariably attached to this arrangement, that a house should be provided for the incumbent, together with a suitable allotment of glebe land : and, in order that the duties of hospitality might be more effectually performed, the residence of the minister was usually fixed either by the way-side, or near the limits of some extensive common.

The whole scheme of our ecclesiastical polity, in those ages, was framed and consolidated by the energy and the intelligence of Archbishop Theodore ; who established an uniformity of discipline and government throughout all the churches, under the primacy of Canterbury. The exertions of this eminent and enlightened prelate, in behalf of literature, have already been honourably mentioned. His spirit seemed, for a time, to animate the clerical order. Their intellectual attainments were, for the age, respectable, and their attention to their sacred duties almost exemplary. But their *first works* were, unhappily, succeeded by a period of degeneracy ; and the decline of piety and learning was hastened by the ruinous ferocity of the Danes. The monastic establishments were destroyed by these ignorant savages ; and a headlong relapse towards barbarism was the natural effect of their fury. All that could be accomplished

by man, was done by Alfred for the restoration of letters and religion. But the hopelessness of the task may be estimated by the fact that, at his accession to the throne, a single priest was not to be found south of the Thames with Latin enough to understand the daily services which he muttered, and that the religious establishments throughout the land were wholly broken up. And when the monastic system began to revive, many years after his death, its resurrection was attended with convulsions that rent the kingdom to pieces, and helped to make it once more an easy prey to its ever watchful and sanguinary assailants.

The spirit that presided over these commotions, was Dunstan; a man who has done more than, perhaps, any other individual that can be mentioned, to inflict upon mankind the curse of a suspicion, that priestcraft and religion are one. The history of superstition can scarcely present another name more infamous for barefaced abuse of vulgar credulity, and for a prodigal application of the grossest machinery of imposture. His grand object was, not to reform the secular clergy, but to erect the Benedictine order on the ruins of the national Church, and to consign to monks the whole spiritual government of the realm. His versatile and commanding genius was well suited to the enterprise; and the success of his machinations was calamitously extensive. It forms altogether a monument of unscrupulous resolution, such as might have appeared extravagant, even in the visions of romance. That it has not, however, been misrepresented, we may collect from the circumstance, that his biography has been delivered to

us, not by calumnious adversaries, but by admiring, and partly by contemporary, chroniclers: and the gratitude of Rome has preserved his name, to this day, on her register of canonized saints.

The works even of this architect of evil were not destined to last. Unhappily, however, the Danes were the instruments employed for their destruction. When they renewed their incursions, the religious establishments, as usual, fell before their stupid ferocity, and the plague of ignorance and depravity once more settled upon the land. The barbarians, indeed, conformed to the religion which they found; but their very conformity was marked with insolence and profaneness. The clergy, whom Dunstan would have made the autocrats of the country, were converted almost into its menial slaves. They were doomed to drain off the cup of humiliation, even to its bitterest dregs: for the savages, who ruled them, frequently compelled them to celebrate the services of the altar, not only in their private houses, but in the very chambers where their wives, or their concubines, were reposing by their sides! In short, the wild deluge of barbarism, wickedness, and tyranny, was rising so rapidly, that, according to all human conjecture, nothing but some great revolution could have arrested its progress; and the Norman Conquest may reasonably be regarded as an instrument at once of the goodness and the severity of God.

Bowed down, however, as they were by the tyranny of their late masters, the clergy still retained sufficient spirit to embarrass and provoke the Conqueror by their inflexible opposition to his government.



The only effect of their resistance was the expulsion of the native ecclesiastics from their dignities, and the introduction of foreigners in their place. Of these the most illustrious was Lanfranc, who reluctantly accepted the primacy of England. By birth he was an Italian, and he brought with him to his office the most eminent attainments which Italy could supply. He combined in his own person all the best qualities, and some few of the worst, which could distinguish a churchman of the eleventh century. He was the restorer and the patron of letters, and was altogether admirable for his charity and munificence, and for the high-minded integrity of his administration. On the other hand, he was ardently devoted to the supremacy of Rome ; he laboured urgently to inflict celibacy upon the clergy ; he was a vehement advocate for the doctrine of the corporeal presence in the sacrament, a dogma scarcely heard of in the Anglo-Saxon Church ; and, lastly, he was by no means scrupulous in the use of that machinery by which superstition loves to maintain its ascendancy. His mind, however, lofty as it was, was not powerful enough to "rebuke the genius" of his master.—The resolute and arbitrary temper of the Conqueror enabled him to stand erect even before the mighty spirit of Hildebrand himself ; and to encounter, with a peremptory refusal, the demand of the Pontiff, that the monarch of England should do fealty for his kingdom to the see of Rome. It will, therefore, scarcely be surprising, if Lanfranc found himself no match for the imperious disposition of his sovereign. Such was his weariness and dejection, under the difficulties which perpetually assailed him, that, at last, he com-

plained of his office as a burden too heavy for him to bear, and actually besought the Pope to relieve him from its oppression.

The gigantic scheme of Gregory VII. for erecting the chair of St. Peter into the throne of Christendom, and making Rome once more the mistress of the world, is sufficiently recorded in the annals of Europe. The march of usurpation was, for a time, diverted from this country, by the inflexible sternness and vigour of the Conqueror, the reckless obstinacy of Rufus, and the intelligent firmness of Henry Beaufort. In the meantime, humanity and literature, which had been revived by the influence of Lanfranc, and of Anselm his successor in the primacy, were prosperously expanding themselves beyond the walls of monasteries, and gradually smoothing down the rudeness of the age. But then came that tornado of desolation, the reign of Stephen, which severely damaged the mounds raised by his predecessors against the tide of encroachment, and left the first of the Plantagenets exposed to its assault. The spirit of that active, but restless and irritable prince, was ill fitted for a conflict with the inflexible genius of Becket. The first subject of controversy between them was, the total immunity of ecclesiastics from secular jurisdiction; a dangerous privilege, with which the course of events had gradually invested them. The dispute, however, at last, virtually resolved itself into the question, whether, or not, the power of the sceptre should bow down before that of the crozier, and the authority of the State be absorbed in that of the Church. The conflict was one

which demanded, on the part of the sovereign, an adamantine solidity of character, like that of the first William, instead of the fitful impatience, and gusty passion, which unhappily distinguished his descendant. None but a mind of extraordinary strength and grandeur could form a fit antagonist for the saint of Canterbury. The struggle would have tasked, to the utmost, the energies of the Conqueror himself; and even, with him, its issue might have been doubtful. The termination of it, in the case of Henry, is well known. It brought him, in the guise of a naked penitent, to the tomb of the intrepid martyr; and it left the public mind prostrate before the throne of the vicegerent of God.

From this time the grasp of the Papal power became continually closer; and the next century beheld a king of England laying his crown at the feet of the Pontifical minister, and binding his realm to the payment of an ignominious tribute. The distractions which followed, contributed, on the whole, to augment the strength, and to swell the arrogance, of the Papal despotism; for, at each vicissitude of the conflict, the appeal was addressed to his tribunal, and, of course, helped to confirm the belief, that the chair of St. Peter was the supreme seat of justice and authority on earth.

The reign of John, and that of Henry the Third, are marked by the infamy of the crusade against the Albigenses, commanded, as we have seen, by our countryman, Simon de Montfort. Bigotry and rapine were the furies which prompted this accursed enterprise: and “it differed in nothing, but in name,

from the ferocious expeditions of the Northman votaries of Thor and Odin³." By the almost total extirpation of the heretics, the fabric of the Papal dominion was to all appearance immovably consolidated. But though their destruction seemed to be complete, many a bleeding remnant of them was dispersed over Europe, to spread, in all directions, a sentiment of unconquerable hatred against the power of Rome. There seems to be no doubt that the sympathy excited by the sufferings of these people had extended to this country. Most certain it is, that a spirit of indignant resistance to the Romish hierarchy began to manifest itself in England about the period of these hateful massacres. From that time, the voice of Parliament began to be frequently heard, in loud remonstrance against the rapacity and insolence of the Pontiff; and the cry was sometimes deepened by murmurs of discontent from the English clergy themselves, who began to feel impatient under the exactions of their master. Even the genius of the scholastic philosophy had secretly helped to inflame the spirit of insurrection. For though it was ill adapted to the purpose of aiding the mind in the discovery of truth, its tendency was, at least, to give activity and independence to the intellect, and to engage it in speculations extremely incommodious to irresponsible power and infallible authority. The agitations produced by these various causes will be occasionally adverted to in the following narrative. In the meantime, it would be unpardonable in a biographer of Wiclif to abstain from reminding the

³ Turner, Hist. Engl.

present age of one, in whom the spirit of religious freedom and integrity manifested itself with an energy, which was the glory of his age, and which fully entitles him to be regarded as the predecessor of our Reformer. The person here alluded to, is Grostete, the ever memorable Bishop of Lincoln.

It appears, that this eminent man was master of all the learning and science which was then to be had, confused and inaccurate as it was. His attainments were such as to confer upon him, for a time, the dangerous renown of a magician ; and, ultimately, to elevate him to the see of Lincoln. He was advanced to this dignity in 1235, when he was about fifty years of age ; and even at that mature period of his life he seems to have been an ardent admirer of the mendicant preachers. His esteem for them had been contracted at the University of Oxford ; probably before they had manifested any symptoms of their subsequent degeneracy. When he was raised to his bishopric, the ignorance and dissoluteness of many of his clergy still impelled him to encourage the labours of these fraternities, to the grievous disparagement and discontent of the parochial incumbents. In this, as in every thing he undertook, he was somewhat fervid and impetuous ; but he lived long enough to repent of his generous confidence in the sanctity and disinterestedness of these Papal auxiliaries. In 1247 an incident occurred, which must have awakened his suspicions—if they were still sleeping)—respecting the spiritual usefulness and efficacy of the new orders. Two Franciscans were despatched to England, armed with a formidable apparatus of credentials, for the extortion of money on behalf of the

Pontiff. Six thousand marks—(probably equivalent to full 50,000*l.* of our present money)—was the sum demanded from the clergy of the diocese of Lincoln! The enormity of the impost, and the pompous insolence of the exactors, filled the honest prelate with indignation and amazement. He told the friars, to their faces, that it was dishonourable and impracticable ; and positively refused to entertain it for an instant, until the sense of the nation should be taken upon its lawfulness. Notwithstanding this intrepid repulse of the mendicants, he succeeded, the next year, in obtaining from Innocent IV. authority to reform the religious orders in his diocese. The letters which conferred this power on him, like all other instruments from Rome, were inordinately costly ; and the event shows that their price was the chief motive which reconciled the Pontiff to such an appearance of concession. In pursuance of this commission, the bishop determined to take into his own custody the rents of the religious houses, in order that he might appropriate to the services of piety, the wealth, which had, hitherto, been wasted in luxury and pomp. This proceeding immediately produced an equally profitable appeal to the Holy See ; and the result was, that Grostete, though an aged man, was compelled to answer it in person, and, for that purpose, to undergo the toil and expense of a journey to Lyons, then the residence of the Pope. The decision, as might be expected, was adverse to the reforming bishop. It, however, overwhelmed his unsuspecting nature with consternation ; and he openly remonstrated with the Pontiff on his duplicity. His astonishment must have been deepened

by the reply of Innocent to his expostulations. "What concern is this of yours?" said he. "You have delivered your own soul; and I have done *my* pleasure, in showing favour to the monks. *Is your eye evil because I am good?*" On this eruption of almost profane effrontery, Grostete was overheard to mutter—"O money, money, how vast is thy power every where—how irresistible at Rome!" The words reached the ears of the Pope: but they only produced a burst of invective, in which he charged the English with a propensity to grind and impoverish each other, and accused the bishop himself of a design upon the property of pious and hospitable men! This language, from the most notorious plunderer in Europe, nearly reduced the bishop to despair. He was, nevertheless, resolved to leave behind him his testimony against these iniquities; which he accordingly did, by delivering to the Pope, and two of his cardinals, copies of a long protest against the unworthy practices of the Pontifical court. The issue of this adventure almost drove him to the resignation of his crozier; and he was withheld from the execution of his purpose only by the recollection, that, to vacate his see, might only be to expose it to a speedier inroad of abuse.

From this time, he accordingly devoted himself more zealously than ever to his episcopal duties; in the discharge of which, he was, no doubt, perpetually invigorated by the indignant recollection of his visit to the Pope. In 1253 the Pontiff put his courage to the proof, by a scandalous exercise of the Papal prerogative of *provision*. He addressed a mandate to the bishop, enjoining him to collate an Italian youth,

the nephew of Innocent, to the first vacant canonry in the cathedral of Lincoln ; and he accompanied his injunction with a menace, that excommunication should be the penalty of disobedience. At the same time, he wrote to his Italian agents in England, charging them to ensure the execution of his orders, under the capacious protection of the *non obstante* clause, which bowed down all existing usages and canons beneath the feet of the existing Pope. The answer of Grostete, of which the following is the substance, is a somewhat curious specimen of ironical courtesy. He begins by declaring his entire readiness to obey all *Apostolical commands* with reverent and filial devotion : but adds, that, out of pure zeal for the paternal honours of his Holiness, he was, likewise, prepared to resist every thing which might be in opposition to the Apostolical precepts. Now, of all violations of those precepts, none could possibly be worse, than to deprive the souls of Christian men of the blessings of pastoral ministrations : and it was manifestly impossible that the Apostolic See (to whom all power was given, not for destruction, but for edification) should command or attempt any thing which might have a tendency so pernicious. For this reason it was, that he found himself under the necessity of most *filially and obediently disobeying* the requisitions, contained in the letters which had recently been addressed to him : and, in so doing, he conceived himself to be very far from the guilt of rebellion. On the contrary, in this very act of resistance, he was but rendering precisely that measure of filial reverence and honour, which was righteously due

from him to the Apostolic father⁴.—The letter of Grostete, however, did by no means reconcile Innocent to this sort of dutiful disobedience. He burst out into violent fury, and swore by Peter and by Paul, that he was well-nigh resolved to make this delirious old man an example and *an astonishment* to the world. Is not the King of England—he exclaimed—my vassal, or rather, my bond-slave? and could I not, by a single word to him, consign this doting priest in a moment to imprisonment and infamy?—And from this paroxysm the Pontiff was scarcely recalled by the remonstrances of his cardinals, who were sensible of the danger of proceeding to extremities against a man of Grostete's reputation for piety and learning.

The wrath of the Pontiff, however, was stronger than the words of his wise men. The sentence of excommunication went forth: and the result was ominous to the majesty of Rome. The thunderbolt fell harmless at the feet of the recusant; and Grostete continued, to the end of his days, in quiet possession of his dignity. Those days, indeed, were then numbered. At the end of the same year, he was seized with the disorder which terminated all his perturbations: and, next to the prospects of a better world, his chief consolation was, to pour out his sorrows into the hearts of his confidential chaplains. His last conversations show that he was enlightened to perceive, that the whole scheme of the Papal government was

⁴ The whole of the letter is in Matthew Paris, Anno 1253, p. 749, 750.

enmity with God. His eyes were, then at least, widely open to the mischief of the Mendicant institution ; and he bitterly deplored that the devotees of poverty should be converted into the *publicans* and extortioners of the Pope, and that the vilest secular passions should lurk beneath the garb of humility and indigence. But the burden of his lamentations was, the positively *Anti-Christian* character which he ascribed to the Romish hierarchy ; for, by what other name, he asked, but that of *Anti-Christ*, are we to designate a power that labours to destroy the souls which Christ came to save and to redeem ?—At last the spirit of prophecy seemed to come upon him, and he exclaimed, that nothing but the edge of the sword could deliver the Church from this Egyptian bondage. In the midst of his lamentations his voice failed him ; and, soon after, he expired. Oct. 9.
1553. His best encomium is the exultation of Innocent, who on hearing of his death, exclaimed, “ I rejoice, and let every true son of the Church rejoice with me, that my great enemy is removed.”

The position taken up by Grostete against the Papal perversions was not, it must be observed, upon purely doctrinal grounds. His veneration for the Apostolic chair was deep and fervent, more especially in the earlier period of his life. His complaint was, that the seat of unity and of truth should be usurped by a spirit, which was, practically, adverse to the truth, and which converted Christian unity into an uniformity of servitude. In his own person, he may be regarded as a noble representative of all the intelligence and piety which, in those days, began to array themselves against the abuses of spiritual

power⁵. His praise is written in the pages of an honest monk, who, though superstitious in his devotion to the Romish supremacy, has not scrupled to describe the holy Bishop of Lincoln as “the open rebuker of the King and the Pope, the reprobator of prelates, the corrector of monks, the director of presbyters, the instructor of the clergy, the supporter of scholars, the preacher to the people, the prosecutor of the dissolute, the diligent searcher of the Scriptures⁶, and the *hammer* of the Romanists, who were objects of his contempt.” And, in another place, he observes that the harshest measures of the bishop against the religious houses were, probably, dictated by a regard to the welfare of the souls committed to his charge. It further appears that his religion, though profound, was far from repulsive and morose. “His hospitable board was graced by liberality and abundance, by cheerfulness and affability. His spiritual table was ‘furnished forth’ with the stores of fervent devotion, and contrition even to tears. In his exercise of the episcopal office he was venerable, laborious, and unwearied⁷. ”

⁵ It is confessed, by a recent historian of the Church, that the seeds of genuine Christianity were in the heart of Grostete; though, “like many of the divines of those days, he knew not the just nature of the Christian article of Justification by Jesus Christ, the righteous.” And yet, the same writer adds, within a few lines, that “dependence on God, as a reconciled Father, in Christ Jesus, was his grand practical principle!”—Milner’s Church History, vol. iv. p. 60, 61.

⁶ “*Scripturarum diversarum*,” are the words of Matthew Paris, p. 754, intimating, most probably, that the bishop had examined the whole range of the Scriptures; a rare commendation in those days.

⁷ Matthew Paris, p. 754.

It is truly remarkable that the obsequies of Grostete were respectfully attended, not only by the secular, but even by the regular clergy of his diocese. It is still more remarkable, that, after the manner of those times, his memory has been honoured by legendary prodigies, such as are usually produced to attest the sanctity of the faithful champions of the Church. It is gravely related by Matthew Paris, that the Bishop of London, then in the neighbourhood of the episcopal palace of Buckden, was suddenly surprised by a strain of ravishing melody, which, however, was unheard by his attendants ; and that the time at which this celestial music saluted him, turned out on inquiry, to be the precise hour of the decease of his brother of Lincoln. He also informs us, that about the same hour, certain Minorite friars, who were wandering in the neighbourhood, and had lost their way, were astonished by the solemn chime of bells, so clear and distinct, that, when the morning came, they eagerly inquired the occasion of it. Nothing of the kind had been heard in the neighbourhood ; but, on their arrival at Buckden, it appeared that, at that very time, the bishop was breathing his last⁶.

⁶ In addition to these wonders, a great posthumous exploit has been ascribed to Grostete. It is said that Innocent IV. was meditating an order to the King of England for disinterring the accursed remains of his inveterate adversary : but that the bishop appeared to him by night, in his full episcopal habit, and with a terrific countenance and menacing voice rebuked the Pontiff for his vindictive and most unchristian design. And, not content with this, he inflicted with his staff so heavy a blow upon his side, that his Holiness roared with anguish, and never recovered from the effects of the chastisement. These stories are, of course, about as valuable as other coin of

But it would have required an army of men like Grostete to retard the accumulation of Papal abuse, during a long and feeble reign like that of Henry III. The vigour of Henry's successor, Edward I., was displayed in harassing his clergy, by arbitrary exactions ; which he carried into effect, in defiance of a bull from Boniface VIII. forbidding any contribution of the Church to the necessities of the State, without his express permission. But, it is worthy of observation, that, distinguished as Edward was for energy and wisdom, he never could summon fortitude enough to discontinue the tribute, which had been imposed by John, and which, during the whole time of Henry III., had been remitted to Rome with infamous punctuality. The miserable reign of Edward II. is almost a nullity in the history of the Church ; and it was not until the days of Edward III., that this badge of vassalage was shaken off, and legislative provision made against the systematic encroachments of the Papacy. We are now approaching to the days of Wiclid ; but before his introduction, it will be necessary to detain the reader, for a moment, in order to present to his attention the two illustrious names of Bradwardine and Fitzralph ; the latter of whom was an object of the deepest veneration with our Reformer.

Bradwardine was one of those humble and contemplative spirits, whose lives exhibit an image of almost

the same mintage. They are, however, not altogether worthless for our purpose. They prove, at least, that, in that age, an intrepid resistance to Romish profligacy was not sufficient to forfeit the veneration even of monks : and the last of them, perhaps, may show the terrors which integrity and courage could inflict upon the conscience of a tyrant.

celestial serenity and peace. It is true that he acted as confessor and confidential chaplain to Edward, in his warlike expeditions. But it is also true that, in this office, he laboured, faithfully and nobly, to mitigate, by the precepts of the Gospel, the atrocities of

Contumelious, beastly, mad-brained war :

and the most glorious testimony to his services is to be found in the professed belief of some writers of that period, that the victories of the chivalrous king are to be ascribed, rather to the virtue and sanctity of his chaplain, than to the gallantry or genius either of the monarch or his captains. It is further most honourable to his memory, that he had the courage to oppose the mild genius of the Gospel to the martial impetuosity of his royal master, and to remind him, in the flush of victory, that “cursed is he who maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.” Equally honourable it was to the monarch himself, that his veneration and attachment were only strengthened by the holy freedom of his chaplain. When the primacy became vacant, the monks of Canterbury chose Bradwardine as archbishop : but Edward was unable to part with his spiritual counsellor ; and, for this reason only, refused to confirm their election. On a second vacancy, their choice again fell upon him, and then the king acquiesced. Bradwardine, accordingly, travelled to Avignon, for the purpose of obtaining the Papal consecration to his office ; and there, the extreme simplicity of his appearance and deportment exposed him to the derision of the Papal court, and provoked an act of unmannery and heartless insult. One Cardinal

Hugh, a nephew of the Pontiff, imagined that he should amuse and gratify the servile crowd, by introducing into the hall a person, habited like a peasant, and seated on an ass, with a petition to the Pope that he would be pleased to appoint him to the see of Canterbury. But, on this occasion, sanctity and innocence were triumphant. The Pope and his cardinals, to their credit be it spoken, resented the indignity offered to this eminent churchman; and the miserable jest brought confusion only on the head of its contriver.

Bradwardine was consecrated at Lambeth, in 1349; but yet he can scarcely be numbered on the catalogue of our prelates; for no sooner was he seated in his dignity, than he was removed by death. He expired only seven days after his consecration; and he is now known to us, not as the primate of England, but as the champion of "the cause of God against Pelagius." His elaborate treatise, in opposition to the error of that heresiarch, shows that his theology, in a great measure, derived its complexion from the spirit of Augustine. But, well would it have been for the Christian world, if all the followers of Augustine had imbibed a temper as meek and humble as that of Bradwardine. A predestinarian, in theory, he undoubtedly was. But, whatever may be the merits of that doctrine, as tried by the principles of philosophy, or the language of Scripture, the Church might regard it with comparative tranquillity, if its fruits were always as mild as those which it produced in the heart of this holy man.

Bradwardine, like many other pious and admirable Churchmen, is an instance, to show that genuine

scriptural religion might grow up in the bosom of the Romish Church, even in the season of its deepest corruption. But devout and thoughtful scholars, like him, attracted but little of her notice : while her eye was keenly fixed on those, who stepped forth to a conflict with the perversions of the time. And, of this stamp, undoubtedly, was Richard Fitzralph. That eminent confessor was bred at Oxford, and was promoted by Edward III. to the archbishopric of Armagh. His residence in the University had given him abundant opportunities of observing the mischief and confusion occasioned by the predominance of the Mendicant orders. These fraternities had been called into existence more than a century before. It had been perceived by the court of Rome that both the monkish and secular clergy had, in a great measure, lost the confidence of the people, and that a new institution would be needful for the preservation of her own influence and dominion. We shall have occasion to advert hereafter, somewhat more particularly, to the rise, the progress, and the degeneracy of the Mendicants. At present, it may be sufficient to observe, that the indignation of Richard Fitzralph was deeply moved by the calamitous effects of their influence on the University of Oxford. Not content with a pertinacious intrusion into academic offices, their restless and usurping spirit invaded the peace of private families. They spared no pains to seduce into their own ranks the most promising students ; and such was their success, that parents at last became fearful of sending their sons to the Universities, lest they should, eventually, be consigned to a life of wandering beggary. The consequence of this alarm was,

that within the recollection of Fitzralph himself, the number of students had been reduced from 30,000 to 6000. He was, accordingly, prepared for any opportunity of helping to suppress this enormous evil : and, being accidentally in London at a time when the encroachments of these orders had roused the opposition of the clergy of that city, he engaged in the conflict against them with so much cordiality and vigour, that he was summoned by them to answer their appeal at Avignon. On this occasion his fortitude did not desert him. To the very face of the Pope and his assembled Cardinals, he maintained boldly, and at great length, his conclusions against the friars : and, among other things, he charged them with hearing the confessions of professed nuns, without the licence of their superiors, and of married women without the knowledge of their husbands. From this period, the remainder of his life appears to have been a constant scene of hardship and danger. After passing seven or eight years in painful and dangerous exile, he expired at Avignon ; and was honoured, in his death, by the acknowledgment of a certain Cardinal, that, on that day, a mighty pillar of Christ's Church was fallen.

Enough has been said to show that the genuine spirit of Christianity was by no means extinct in our land, even in those seasons when the signs of animation were the most languid. The breath and the pulse of life were still to be discerned ; but the misfortune was, that the truth had, for the most part, retired to the strongholds of religious and contemplative retirement : and its action there was scarcely powerful enough to keep up the moral circulation

throughout the social mass. But, however low may have been her spiritual condition, England had, for several centuries, been, at least, singularly exempt from all suspicion of *heresy*; and was occasionally complimented by the Pontiffs for the distinguished *purity* of her faith. In the reign of Henry the Second, it is true, a small band of foreigners, not more than thirty in number, with one Gerard for their leader, had settled in England, and had brought with them various strange opinions; such as the rejection of the sacraments, and of the ordinance of matrimony. They are supposed to have belonged to the sect, known by the name of Cathari, which was then numerous and active in the north of Italy, and in Germany. The only fruit of their missionary labours was one solitary female, who abjured her new profession as soon as it became dangerous. The demeanour of these people was inoffensive; but their opinions soon became notorious, and exposed them to the severity of ecclesiastical discipline. By the authority of the king they were summoned before a synod of bishops. To arguments they replied, that their duty was to believe, and not to dispute; to menaces, that our Lord had said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." The judges consigned them over to the secular arm, by which they were branded on the forehead, stripped to the waist, and whipped through the city of Oxford, where the synod was held. According to one account, they were turned out to perish miserably, in utter destitution of raiment, shelter, or sustenance! These, we are told, were the first heretics ever seen in England, since the Saxon invasion. The second,

and, so far as we are informed, the last adventure of the same kind, occurred in the reign of John, when certain sectaries, by the name of Albigenses, arrived in this country, some of whom, as Knighton⁹ concisely informs us, were burned alive¹.

Either by these severities, or by other causes, the realm of England seems to have been nearly separated from all communion with that restless spirit of innovation, which had long been wandering over the European continent. But the absence of fanaticism was but a poor compensation for the want of every thing like sound religious instruction. Many bright examples may, doubtless, be found in our ecclesiastical annals, of sincere devotion, extensive learning, and fervid zeal, among the prelates and clergy of that age. But, had all our primates and bishops, during the period in question, combined all the best qualities of Grostete and Bradwardine, it would have tasked them, to the very utmost, to make any salutary impression upon the general mass of the popula-

⁹ Knighton, 2418. No mention of this fact is to be found in Matthew Paris, who, nevertheless, gives a very dark picture of the impiety of the Albigenses. Anno, 1213.

¹ We do find, indeed, that a synod was held at London, by Archbishop Peckham, in 1266, for the suppression of certain opinions, which had recently been maintained in the province of Canterbury, relative to the sacramental mystery. The notions in question, however, involved several points of great scholastic nicety, and were not of a nature which was likely to recommend them much to the public attention. The most hazardous of these positions was that which affirmed that, in this question, men were not bound by the authority of Pope or Fathers, but solely by that of the Bible, and "necessary reason." Wilk. Conc. vol. ii. p. 123.

tion. A dreary gulf was *fixed* between the lordly barons and their serfs and vassals. Hopeless degradation appears to have been the inheritance of the peasantry ; and nothing but the charity which is strong as death, could be sufficient to encounter the resistance of their obdurate ignorance, and almost desperate wretchedness. It was even questioned, in those times, whether a *villain* could be admitted into heaven ; and nothing, most certainly, could be better adapted to render him unfit for such admission, than the prevalence of so brutalizing a suspicion. That the generality of the clergy, all this while, were unfit for the office of preparing their people for the hour of death, or the day of judgment, seems beyond all question. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, their “ignorance, folly, and grossness,” are vehemently denounced by Archbishop Peckham ; who complains, that those places which most urgently needed instruction, were never so much as visited ; so that the words of the prophet were calamitously verified—*the children asked for bread, and there was none to break it unto them : the poor and destitute cried for water, and their tongue was parched up.* In order to remedy this crying scandal, he commanded that each parochial clergyman should preach to his people, either by himself or a substitute, once, at least, in every quarter of a year ; and should expound to them, in a popular manner, “without any fantastic texture of subtilty,” the fourteen articles of faith, the ten commandments, the twofold precept of love to God and our neighbour, the seven works of charity, the seven capital sins with their *progeny*, the seven principal virtues, and the

seven sacraments of grace. And, lest the clergy should convert their own ignorance into a dispensation from this order, he adds a variety of instructions for the proper discharge of the duty enjoined, which convey, of themselves, a bitter rebuke to the incompetency of the spiritual guides². All this while, the people were left, not only without the Scriptures, but almost without devotional helps of any kind, in any degree adapted to their wants. What benefit could they derive from the volumes of Anselm, or of Grosstete? How were their spiritual thirst and famine to be relieved by Archbishop Edmund's *Speculum Ecclesiae*, or Bradwardine's assault upon the heresy of Pelagius? The earlier part of the fourteenth century, indeed, was memorable for the spirit with which the English language began to be cultivated. Such of the clergy as had leisure or taste for the occupation, frequently addicted themselves to poetry, and occasionally infused into their compositions much of a serious and devotional character. Among these, Rolle, the hermit of Hampole, has earned for himself a considerable name; and he still more amply merited the gratitude of his countrymen by translating the psalms and hymns of the Church into English prose,

² Constitutiones Johannis Peckham Archiep. Cantuar. Wilk. Conc. vol. ii. p. 54—56. There is something curious in the Archbishop's instructions relative to extreme unction. He recommends that this sacrament should be administered even to those who may be labouring under phrensy, or any sort of mental alienation, provided that the party had, before his seizure, expressed any concern for his salvation; having, as he tells us, found from experience, that the receiving of this rite would either procure the sufferer a *lucid interval*, or at least be, in some way, instrumental to his spiritual benefit.

and by adding a commentary to each verse. Various other portions of the Scriptures appear to have been, from time to time, translated by intelligent and pious clergymen, for the use of their respective congregations : but, on the whole, it is quite indisputable, that, in the fourteenth century, nothing had been done of sufficient efficacy to produce any deep effect on the gross spiritual ignorance of the British population.

The case, therefore, as regards the religious condition of the people of England, at the time of Wiclif's appearance, seems to have been nearly this. The licence of opinion, which had spread itself over many parts of Christendom, had not approached them. They were scarcely, if at all, tainted with doctrinal heresy, and little in the habit of opposing the spiritual supremacy of Rome. Throughout all ranks, however, it had been more or less deeply felt, that her power had frequently been exercised in a spirit of intolerable arrogance and rapacity ; and it was likewise known that both the temporal and the spiritual sword had been often wielded with atrocious severity by the successor of St. Peter. The exactions and usurpations of the Pontifical court could be readily estimated by those, who were indifferent to her aberrations from the primitive purity of faith ; and the fury with which she had smitten her adversaries, must have begun to raise up certain misgivings, as to the legitimacy of that power, which could be maintained only by fire and sword. And hence it was that England, although deemed a citadel of orthodoxy, was, in those times, by no means the seat of contented allegiance to the Apostolic See. She might, perhaps, have been satisfied to slumber

for centuries longer, under the drowsy influences of the Romish superstition, if the burden of Romish dominion had been less galling and oppressive. As it was, she had an ear for the lessons of any teacher, endowed with address, and energy enough to expose the abuses which had so long insulted her patience, and exhausted her resources.

It is hoped that the foregoing survey, imperfect as it is, may furnish the reader with some conception of the progress of feeling and opinion, in this country, relative to ecclesiastical affairs ; and may enable him to discern something of the process by which the public mind was, at least partially, ripened for the labours and services of Wiclid.

CHAPTER III.

1324—1367.

Birth of Wyclif—Wyclif admitted at Queen's College, Oxford—Removes to Merton College—Acquires the title of Evangelic Doctor—His mastery in the scholastic learning—His Tract on the Last Age of the Church—He commences his attacks on the Mendicant Orders—Notice of the first institution of the Mendicants—Their efficacy on their first Establishment—Their enormous increase—Their rapacity and turbulence—Their introduction into England in 1221—Its bad effects—Richard Fitzralph's opposition to them, followed up by Wyclif—The sum of Wyclif's objection to them contained in a Tract of his, published twenty years later—Letters of Fraternity—Oxford Statute in restraint of the Mendicants—Interference of Parliament—Wyclif presented to the Rectory of Fillingham, which he exchanges afterwards for that of Lutgershall—Promoted to the Wardenship of Baliol College, which he resigns for the Headship of Canterbury Hall, founded by Archbishop Islip—His appointment pronounced void by Archbishop Langham—Wyclif appeals to the Pope, who ultimately ratifies Langham's decree—The Pope's decision confirmed by the Crown—Wyclif vindicated against the suspicion of being impelled by resentment to hostilities against the Papacy—The Pope revives his claim of homage and tribute from England—Edward III. lays the demand before Parliament, who resolve that it ought to be resisted—Wyclif challenged to defend the Resolution of Parliament—His reply to the challenge.

ABOUT six miles from the town of Richmond, in Yorkshire, is the small village of Wyclif, which, from the Conquest to the end of the sixteenth century, was the residence of a family of the same name, who

were lords of the manor, and patrons of the rectory. ^{Birth of Wiclit, 1324.} In this village, or its immediate vicinity, there is good reason to believe that John Wiclit³ was born, about the year 1324. According to a local tradition he was related to this family. Nothing, it is true, has been found, in any extant records of the household, to confirm this report. But this may, perhaps, be accounted for by the circumstance, that, very early in the seventeenth century, the property is said to have passed, by the marriage of the heiress, into a family of another name.

Of the childhood of Wiclit nothing whatever is known. Oxford was the scene of his maturer studies, and of his future glory. His name occurs in the list ^{Wiclit admitted at Queen's College, Oxford.} of students first admitted at Queen's College, a seminary then of very recent foundation. It was established in the year 1340, chiefly by the munificence of Philippa, Queen of Edward the Third, influenced and directed by the zeal of Robert Eglesfield, her chaplain. For reasons now unknown, he speedily removed from ^{Removes to Merton College.} Queen's to Merton College, a society illustrious for many of the most celebrated names in learning and divinity. In the course of that century it supplied the English Church with three metropolitans, Thomas Bradwardine, "*the Profound Doctor*," Simon Mepham, and Simon Islep. Within its precincts, Walter Burley collected the solid

³ The orthography of the name, in different writers, is so perplexing by its variety, that I have thought it expedient to adopt that which has the smallest number of letters. With Lewis, therefore, I shall write the Reformer—WICLIF.

erudition which acquired for him the title of the “*Per-spicuous Doctor*,” and which elevated him to the office of preceptor to Edward IV. The renowned William Occam was another of the sons of Merton, known as the *Singular Doctor* and *Venerable Inceptor*; and, according to some accounts, the immortal Duns Scotus himself, is to be numbered among the luminaries of this distinguished fraternity.

In these seats of learning and piety it was the lot of Wiclf to acquire a title more truly honourable than any of those above enumerated, that of the *Evangelic or Gospel Doctor*. ^{Acquires the title of Evangelic Doctor.}

Like all other students of his day who aspired to eminence, he devoted himself, with steady application, to the scholastic philosophy. Such was his diligence, that he is said to have committed to memory many of the more intricate portions of Aristotle⁴; and such was his success, that the bitterest enemy of his name⁵ has described him as “second to none in philosophy, and in scholastic discipline altogether incomparable.” With the study of the schoolmen he associated those of the civil and the canon law; accomplishments, in that age, indispensable to the re-

His mastery in the scholastic learning.

⁴ Lewis, p. 2.

⁵ Knighton de Eventibus Angliae, Col. 2644. This writer was a canon of Leycester, contemporary with Wiclf, and a cordial hater of him, his doctrines, and his followers. His language is as follows: “Doctor in theologia eminentissimus in diebus illis. In philosophia nulli reputabatur secundus: in scholasticis disciplinis incomparabilis. Hic maxime nitebatur aliorum ingenia subtilitate scientiae et profunditate ingenii sui transcendere, et ab opinionibus eorum variare.”

putation of a consummate scholar and divine. His industry, further, embraced the municipal laws and customs of his own country,—a pursuit not, perhaps, so fashionable at that period, but quite as worthy of the attention of an Englishman as the laws of the empire, or the compilations of Gratian. His theological principles were formed by a diligent perusal of the primitive Christian writers; and, chiefly, of four of the most distinguished fathers of the Church, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Basil, and St. Gregory. Of more modern divines, the two that stood highest in his estimation appear to have been the illustrious Robert Grostete, Bishop of Lincoln in the early part of the preceding century, and Richard Fitzralph, formerly Chancellor of Oxford and Professor of Divinity there, and promoted to the see of Armagh about the year 1347. But the studies of Wiclid were most nobly distinguished from those of his contemporaries by his ardent devotion to the sacred Volume itself, which eventually won for him the illustrious appellation above alluded to, of the Evangelic or Gospel Doctor, and which, above all his other accomplishments, qualified him to impress an image of himself on future generations.

It is, fortunately, somewhat difficult for us, in these times, worthily to represent to ourselves the vigour and independence of mind, implied in the resolution of a teacher of theology, in the fourteenth century, to take his stand in the citadel of revealed truth. On the one hand, such an instructor had to encounter the frown of Papal Infallibility, which forbade all appeal to the Scriptures, from the authority of the Church. On the other hand, there awaited him the scowl of

the scholastic Philosophy, which looked with scorn on those shallow spirits, who resorted directly to the sacred text. In this and the two preceding centuries the compilations of Peter Lombard⁶ were in much higher and more universal estimation than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "The graduate," says Roger Bacon⁷, "who reads (or lectures on) the text of Scripture, is compelled to give way to the reader of the Sentences, who every where enjoys honour and precedence. He who reads the Sentences has the choice of his hour, and ample entertainment among the religious orders. He who reads the Bible is destitute of these advantages, and sues, like a mendicant, to the reader of the Sentences, for the use of such hour as it may please him to grant. He who reads the Sums of Divinity, is every where allowed to hold disputation, and is venerated as master; he who only reads the text is not permitted to dispute at all; *which is absurd!*" Such is the language of the illustrious Friar Bacon, in the thirteenth century. That of John of Salisbury, in the twelfth century, was still stronger. He tells us that, in his time, the more scriptural teachers were "not only rejected as philosophers, but unwillingly endured as clergymen—nay, were scarcely acknow-

⁶ Peter Lombard was Bishop of Paris in the twelfth century. His *book of Sentences* was principally a compilation from the fathers, made, probably, with the best intentions; and designed to fortify religious faith with the aid of the scholastic metaphysics. It was intended to form a complete body of divinity, and was the theological wonder of the Middle Ages.

⁷ See the original, quoted in note (7), to Mosheim's Eccl. History, vol. iii. p. 93, from Roger Bacon's Op. Maj. published in 1733, at London, by Sam. Jebb, from the original MSS.

ledged to be men. They became objects of derision, and were termed the bullocks of Abraham, or the asses of Balaam⁸." In short, the biblical method of instruction was trampled under foot by the overbearing authority of *irrefragable* and *seraphic* doctors. And yet, in this state of the public mind it was, that Wiclf ventured to associate the study of the Scriptures with the keenest pursuit of the scholastic metaphysics ; and to assign to the Bible the full supremacy which belongs to it, as disclosing to us *the way, the truth, and the life.*

It was well, however, for the cause of scriptural Christianity, that Wiclf went forth to his achievements, covered over with the whole armour of the intellectual knight-errantry of his day ; that he was master of "the nice fence, and the active practice" of the schools, as well as able to wield the two-edged sword of the Spirit. This happy combination of accomplishments served, at least, to win him the respect of all parties. It must have secured him the reverence of his followers ; and effectually disabled his adversaries from attempting to cast discredit on his cause, by pointing to the ignorance or incapacity of the advocate. The first open trial of his powers was in the year 1356, when he put forth a small tract, on the Last Age of the tract, entitled, "The Last Age of the Church.⁹" The train of thought which

⁸ "— nec modo philosophos negant, imo nec clericos patiuntur, vix homines sinunt esse ; sed boves Abrahæ, vel asinos Balaamitas duntaxat nominant, imo derident." Metalog. p. 746, quoted in Turner's Hist. Engl. vol. i. p. 508, note (66).

⁹ It is here assumed that Wiclf was the author of this

led to this production seems to have been occasioned by the pestilence, which broke out in Tartary in the year 1345, and, after desolating Asia, and part of Africa, extended its ravages to the West. It is supposed to have swept away full one-third of the population of Europe. It is also said to have been attended with one very strange effect,—that all the children, born after the pestilence, were found to be without the usual complement of teeth: a circumstance pointedly alluded to in the Tract¹. The malady appeared in this country, at Dorchester, in the year 1348. In November it reached the metropolis; and, thence, continued its progress to the north. The numbers which perished in London have been computed at 50,000 souls: and, so dreadful was the havoc, that, by many, it was regarded as the almost immediate forerunner of the final doom. The meditations of the writer, on this awful calamity, appear to have been, partly, suggested by the study of certain ancient predictions, circulated under the name of one Joachim, a Calabrian abbot², who lived

Tract. This, however, though probable enough, is very far from certain: and the same may be said of other writings usually ascribed to him. On this subject, the attention of the reader is particularly requested to the notice of Dr. Todd's edition of the Tract, in the preface to this volume.

The date, 1356, seems sufficiently verified by a passage in the Tract, in which the author appears to speak of himself as writing in that year. See Dr. Todd's edition, p. xxxi.

¹ *Ibid.* p. xxxii.

² Respecting this Joachim, consult Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 209—211. 238. 289. 293; and compare Fleury, vol. xv. p. 595—599. The Papal historian dwells, with evident satisfaction, on the rigid and austere sanctity of the monk, on his threadbare

towards the end of the twelfth century; and who foretold the destruction of the Church, and the approach of a new era, under the appellation of the Age of the Holy Ghost. These, and similar researches, seem to have brought Wiclif to the persuasion that the plagues, with which the nations had recently been scourged, were indications that the designs of God were hastening to a close; and that, with the fourteenth century, the world would come to an end. In support of the notion that, between the first and second advent of Christ, four periods of heavy tribulation were to intervene, he relies on the authority of Eusebius, Bede, St. Bernard, and Haymon³: and, moreover, on certain cabalistical, and scarcely intelligible

apparel, with its singed and ragged skirts, and on the almost miraculous increase of his alacrity and vigour, which seemed to be more abundant, in proportion to the scantiness of his diet. Of the prophetic gifts of the saint, however, he speaks with prudent reserve ("il passoit pour avoir le don de prophétie.") And, in truth, it is scarcely to be imagined that any faithful *Catholic* could dwell, with much complacency, on predictions which represented the Church of Rome as the fleshy synagogue of Satan, and spoke of it as doomed to certain demolition. Whether these prophecies are rightly ascribed to Joachim, seems rather doubtful. In his name, however, they became, unquestionably, current. The reputed prophecies of Hildegardis (a nun who lived in the middle of the twelfth century), are much in the same strain, and were gravely appealed to by John Hus. See Fox's *Martyrs*, vol. i. p. 525.

³ The Tract, p. xxiv., refers to St. Bernard's 33rd Sermon on the Canticles. The other works adverted to are, probably, the *Chronicon* of Eusebius;—the *Chronicon* of Bede, *sive de sex aetatibus mundi*;—and the *Historia Ecclesiastica Breciarium*, *sive de Christianorum Rerum Memoriâ*, Libb. x., of Haymo, Bishop of Halberstadt, who died A.D. 853. See Dr. Todd's edition, p. lxi.

gible, computations, founded on the letters of the Hebrew and Latin alphabets. Of these tribulations, the first was the repeated onset of persecution. The second, was the pestilent infection of open heresy. The third, was the more secret heresy of Simonism, which made merchandize of the Church. The last was to include the final triumphs of Antichrist ; the knowledge of whose coming God has reserved unto himself. The final visitation, however, was to occur, at some time in the course of the fourteenth century ; which is, accordingly, designated as the "Last Age of the Church ;" and so gives its title to the treatise in question.

As a work on prophecy, the tract is, of course, entirely worthless. Neither is it a promising specimen of the powers of the writer. There are parts of it, indeed, which, if written at the present day, even with all the advantages of modern composition, might possibly expose the author to some suspicion of being almost beside himself. It may not be without its value, however, as indicating the tendency of Wiclit's mind, at the early age of twenty-five. Other thoughtful men were looking for the causes of wrath upon the surface of society ; which exhibited a general propensity for toyish vanities, capricious prodigality of apparel, and habits of voluptuous indulgence⁴.

⁴ Contemporary writers furnish a curious account of these extravagances. They mention, with deep abomination, the silken hoods, and the party-coloured coats, and the deep sleeves, and the narrow waists, and the bushy beards, and the *long tails*, and, above all, the sinful prolongation of the pointed shoes, which distinguished the exquisites and the coxcombs of those times. The female sex did not escape the denunciation. The

Wiclid, on the contrary, arraigned the prevalent vices of the clergy, and declared that, among *them* was the seat of the national distemper. He speaks of the smiting of the people, and the *hurtling* together of realms, because the honours of Holy Church are given to unworthy men. And he pronounces the coming tribulation to be so heavy, that well would it be for that man who should not then be alive. Death, and vengeance of sword, and mischiefs unknown before, should befall the men of those days, because of the sins of Priests.—“Hence, shall they be cast out of their fat benefices: and men shall say,—He came into his benefice by his kindred, by a covenant made before; he, for his worldly service came into the Church, and this for money. Then, every such priest shall cry, *Alas! alas!* that no good spirit dwelt in me, at my coming into the Church of God! . . . In those days, men of Holy Church shall be reckoned as carrion: as dung shall they be cast out in open places.” He concludes by reminding his readers that “Jesus Christ entered into holy things, that is, into Holy Church, by holy living, and holy teaching: and, with his blood he delivered man’s nature. . . . So, when we were sinful, and the children of wrath, God’s Son came out of heaven, and praying his father for his enemies, he died for us. Then, much rather,

enormous height of their head-dress, with its streaming ribbons, their tunics, half of one colour and half of another, their costly girdles, profusely decorated with embroidery and gold, their exchange of the ambling palfrey for the prancing charger, the unbecoming boldness or levity of their demeanour,—all these were dwelt upon with horror and indignation, as signs of an age ripe for destruction. See Lingard, vol. iv. p. 90.

shall we be saved, now that we are made righteous by his blood : as St. Paul writeth to the Romans. And, that Jesus shall pray for us,—and that he is gone into heaven to appear for us in the presence of God,—the same (Paul) writeth also to the Hebrews. The which presence may he grant us to behold, who liveth and reigneth, world without end. Amen."

This attack upon the clerical degeneracy of the age was but prelusive to more stubborn conflicts. It seems highly probable, though not absolutely certain, that, about the year 1360, Wiclit became notorious for standing foremost in that warfare which had for some time been vigorously carried on against the Mendicant Orders ; and that his activity in the conflict first elevated him to a commanding rank, in the public estimation. The order of begging friars, early in the preceding century, at a time when the opulence of the monastic establishments had converted most of them into huge "castles of indolence," to which the enemies of superstition were perpetually pointing, when they were desirous of awakening the world to a sense of the abuses of the Church. The Papacy, environed by adversaries, and presenting so many vulnerable points, accepted with gladness the services of an Order, which promised to exhibit to the world an image of primitive simplicity and self-denial. In them the Pontificate would be provided with a hardy and devoted militia, thoroughly prepared for all the various exigencies of her warfare. On the one hand, she

1360.
Wiclit commen-
ces his attaeks
on the Mendic-
ant Orders.

would be effectually guarded against the hostility of princes, and on the other, against the encroachments of heresy. The most ample and honourable privileges were, accordingly, lavished on those fraternities which made a voluntary abjuration of property ; and whose members were ready to disperse themselves throughout Christendom, relying for their support on the alms of the faithful, and, for their influence, on the example of an austere, laborious, and holy life.

The efficacy of For a considerable time, the new institution did its office to admiration. The first institution. effect was like the transfusion of fresh life-blood into a decaying system. The genius of the Institution penetrated, quickly, into every department of ecclesiastical agency, whether high or low, whether obscure or eminent. It intruded itself into the region of parochial duty ; it seated itself in the confessional ; it seized on the chair of the University ; it grasped the crozier of episcopacy ; it held the seals of civil office, and the portfolio of diplomatic intrigue ; till, at last, it appeared probable that the confidence and veneration of nearly the whole Catholic world would be transferred from their established guides, to these professors of primitive sanctity and perfection.

It was not to be expected that the secular clergy, or the ancient religious orders, would regard, without jealousy, the reputation and the prosperity of their rivals : and, as might have been anticipated, symptoms of degeneracy began speedily to develope themselves among the new societies, and to animate both priest and monk with the hopes of a successful resistance to their power. In the first place, the dis-

tinguished honours heaped on the Mendicant system had enormously multiplied its numbers: and such was the rapidity of this accumulation, that it threatened almost to overwhelm the power which had called it into existence. Accordingly, in 1272, Gregory X. found it necessary to repress these "*extravagant swarms*" of holy beggars, and to confine the institution to the four denominations of Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, and Hermits of St. Augustine. But the immoderate increase of their numbers was not the only circumstance which tended to impair the respect of the world for their itinerant instructors. In the course of time these professors of poverty were often found transformed into prodigies of opulence. Men beheld, with astonishment⁵, that the barefooted brethren, to whom property was an accursed thing, which they were to *touch not, and handle not*, became gradually, by some strange legerdemain, the lords of stately edifices, and ample revenues; and appeared in a fair way to rival the hierarchy in wealth, as effectually as they had rivalled

Enormous increase of the Mendicants.

⁵ Matthew Paris, speaking of their turbulent and intrusive establishment of themselves at St. Edmund's Bury, in 1258, says,—“*hoc audientes universi, non poterant satis admirari quod tam sancti viri, qui spontaneam paupertatem elegerunt, contempto Dei timore, et tam reverendi martyris et hominum oblocutione, et privilegiorum et conservatorum tuitione, violenter illius nobilis Ecclesiae statum perturbarunt.*” And again, in reference to a similar irruption at Dunstable, in 1259, he observes,—“*domicilia adeò sumptuosa construxerant, ut in oculis intuentium, tot sumptus subito effusi a pauperibus fratribus, paupertatem voluntariam professis, admirationem suscitarent.*” Matth. Par. p. 830, and 845, ed. 1684.

them in authority and influence. And this manifest abandonment of the original spirit of their system, naturally provided their adversaries with another formidable ground for complaint and opposition.

1221. ^{Introduction of the Mendicants into England.} It was in the year 1221 that these former ^{formers} first made their appearance in England, under the conduct of Gilbert de Fresney, who, with twelve Dominican brethren, obtained an establishment in Oxford. On their first arrival they enjoyed the patronage of, perhaps, the greatest ecclesiastical name of that age, the illustrious Bishop Grostete ; who, however, lived to repent the encouragement he had lavished upon them, and to denounce them as the heaviest curse that could be in-

^{Its bad effects.} inflicted on the cause of Christianity ⁶. The system produced, here, in full measure, the same effects which raised against it the voice of the rest of Europe. The monkish chronicles are filled with complaints of the rapacity, ambition, and turbulence, of the Mendicant Orders ; and the furious animosities which broke out between these intruders and the ancient clergy, both secular and monastic, began to rouse the Christian world from its infatuation. “ It is a matter of melancholy presage,” says Matthew Paris, “ that, within the four and twenty years of their establishment in England, these friars have piled up their mansions to a royal altitude. Impudently transgressing the bounds of poverty, the very basis of their profession, they fulfil, to the letter,

⁶ “ God says that evil teachers been the cause of destruction of the people, *and Grostete declares it well*, and friars been the principal evil teachers ; they been principal cause of destroying this world.” Wiclif, against the Order of Friars, cap. 26.

the ancient prophecies of Hildegard, and exhibit inestimable treasures within their spacious edifices, and lofty walls. They beset the dying bed of the noble and the wealthy, in order to extort secret bequests from the fears of guilt or superstition. No one now has any hope of salvation but through the ministry of the *preachers* or the *Minorites*. They are found at the court, in the character of counsellors, and chamberlains, and treasurers, and negociators of marriage. As the agents of papal extortion, they are incessantly applying the arts of flattery, the stings of rebuke, or the terrors of confession. They pour contempt on the sound Orders of Benedict and Augustine; and, according to their estimate, the black-cowled brethren are as much superior to the monks, as the disciples of Epicurus would be to so many simpletons and boors⁷."

—“With overbearing insolence, they frequently enquired of the devout, by whom they had been confessed? And if the answer was, by my own priest, they replied, and who is that *ignoramus*? He never heard lectures in theology; he never gave his nights to the study of the decrees; he never learned to unravel knotty questions. They are all blind, and leaders of the blind. Come to us, who know how to distinguish leper from leper.” The consequence of all this was, not only that the parochial clergy fell into contempt, but that their parishioners, no longer compelled to blush in the presence of their local ministers⁸, broke out into unbridled licentiousness.

⁷ *Math. Paris*, p. 541, ed. 1684.

⁸ “— Cum rubor et confusio in confessione pars sit maxima et potissima in *poenitentiâ*.” *Math. Par.* p. 608, ed. 1684.

For thus (the chronicler informs us,) did they whisper to each other,—“Let us follow our own pleasure. Some one of the preaching brothers will soon travel this way,—one whom we never saw before, and never shall see again ; so that, when we have had our will, we can confess without trouble or annoyance.” Such was the influence they derived from the patronage of the Pope, and the confidence of the people, that they were enabled to bid defiance to the power of the conventional clergy, and sometimes to usurp their privileges, and even to appropriate their revenues : to the utter amazement of all thinking persons, who could not but wonder at such excesses of rapacity and insolence, exemplified by the *poor brethren*,—the holy professors of voluntary indigence⁹. To fill up the measure of evil, it appears, that the country was, at last, so overrun by swarms of friars, and so disturbed by their disorders, that our ancient records are filled with warrants for the arrest of the sanctimonious vagrants¹.

Richard Fitz-
ralph's opposi-
tion to the Men-
dicants. These abuses had become so intolerable in the reign of Edward III., that, (as we have already seen,) in the year

1357, Richard Fitzralph, Archbishop of Armagh, fearlessly arraigned the mendicants before the Pope ; and there is little doubt that his exertions were

⁹ Of this several instances are recorded by Matth. Paris, 608. 830. 845, ed. 1684.

¹ See Turner's History of England, vol. ii. p. 413, note (63), which contains various references to such orders in the reigns of Henry III., Edward I., and Edward II. Among them is one general order to arrest them all over the kingdom : “ *De religiosis vagabundis arrestandis per totum regnum.* ”

vigorously followed up by Wiclid. It may not, perhaps, be possible for us, at the present day, confidently to affix to any of his extant writings against them, a date so early as the year 1360. But the commencement of his labours in this cause has, with almost unanimous consent, been referred to this period by all the writers, whether friendly or adverse, who have mentioned his name. The pith and marrow of his controversy, with these religionists, may be found in a small treatise “against the Orders of Friars,” which was published by him full twenty years later, and in which his charges and objections are arranged under fifty distinct heads or chapters².

² This tract, together with his petition to the King and Parliament, was printed in a small volume at Oxford, in 1608, with the title,—“Two short treatises against the Orders of Begging Friars; compiled by that famous Doctour of the Church, and preacher of God’s word, John Wiclid, sometime fellow of Merton, and Master of Balliol College, Oxford, and afterwards Parson of Lutterworth in Lecestershire, faithfully printed according to two ancient copies, extant, the one in Benet College in Cambridge, the other remaining in the public library at Oxford.” At the end of the same volume is an Apology for John Wiclid, “shewing his conformitye with the now Church of England, with answer to such slanderous objections as have been urged against him by Father Parsons, the Apologists, and others. Collected chiefly out of divers of works of his, in written hand, by God’s especial providence remaining in the public library at Oxford. By Thomas James, keeper of the same, 1608.” The heads of the fifty heresies or errors laid to the charge of the Mendicants by Wiclid, are given by Lewis, p. 22—30 : and the Reformer says, in conclusion of his treatise, that there be “many moe, if men wole seek them well out ;” and that the “Friars been cause, beginning, and maintaining of perturbation in Christiandome, and of all evils of this worlde : and these errors shallen never be amended, til Friars be brought to freedom of the Gospel, and clean religion of Jesu Christ.”

The remainder of his life, however, from the period of his first appearance against them, may, without much inaccuracy, be described as one continued protest against the iniquity of these Orders. He never seems to have lost sight of the subject. His reprobation of their practices is prodigally scattered over his writings. To his latest breath, he never ceased to denounce them as the pests of society,—as the bitter enemies of all pure religion,—and as monsters of arrogance, hypocrisy, and covetousness.

The limits of this narrative will not admit of any satisfactory abstract of the treatise in question:—and most modern readers would probably find the perusal of it a somewhat repulsive task. To them it might, perhaps, appear to be drawn up, like some other of Wiclif's writings, in a spirit of coarse invective, if not of slanderous exaggeration. But, the abuses must have been great which could have impelled the most daring adversary to such a representation of them. The very first article of this long indictment contains a strange and startling charge. Divested of its ancient form, it runs thus:—“Friars say that their religion, founded by sinful men, is more perfect than that religion, or order, which Christ himself made, who is both God and man³. ” The existence of any such notion as this, may, perhaps, appear incredible. And yet it is much to be feared that the above is no other than the undisguised statement of a theory current among Romish controversialists, in more modern times. According to this system, the *Catholic* faith has been in a constant state of expansion, from its first planting to the present hour. It has gradually

³ Lewis, p. 22.

unfolded itself into a variety of practices and doctrines, which are stigmatized by *Protestantism*, as innovations and corruptions; but which, in fact, are no other than true legitimate *developments* of the primitive truth: so that the *Catholic Church* is, now, in possession of a Christianity more perfect and full-grown than was known to her original teachers and professors. The ancient auxiliaries of Rome, therefore,—even if justly accused by Wiclit,—affirmed no more than that which is now maintained, in a more subtle and insidious manner, by certain of her modern champions and expositors.

The fifteenth of Wiclit's objections charges the begging Friars with deceiving and pillaging the people by their *Letters of Fraternity*; which he describes as “powdred with hypocrisy, covetise, simonie, blasphemie, and other leasings.” These Letters of Fraternity. precious documents, it seems, were written on fine vellum, splendidly illuminated, under the seal of the fraternity, and covered with sacerdot: and they conveyed to the faithful and wealthy purchaser an assurance of his participation in the masses, vigils, and other religious exercises of the holy brotherhood, both during his life, and after his death. So that they provided the sinner, who was able to purchase them, with a sort of running dispensation, which always kept pace with the utmost speed of his transgressions. It should, however, be observed that this imposture does not appear to have been peculiar to the Mendicants. They practised it in common with other religious societies⁴, though possibly with

⁴ See Lewis, p. 24, note (r), also p. 301, where a copy is given of one of these letters, granted by the convent of Christ Church, Canterbury, to the mother of the famous Dean Colet.

more shameless enormity ; as Wiclif, indeed, very plainly intimates ; for he says of them, that “they passen bishoppes, popes, and eke God himself. For *they* grant no pardon, but if [except] men be contrite and shrien, and of merite of Christ’s passion, and other saints ; but friars maken no mention, nether of contrition, ne shrift, ne merite of Christ’s passion, but only of ther own good deeds.”

It is not to be supposed that these Orders would passively endure any attack upon their privileges, especially as they were notoriously impatient of contradiction. For a time, their activity and perseverance seem to have only been augmented by opposition. To arrest the ruin with which their intrigues

Oxford statute, in restraint of the Mendicants. threatened the University of Oxford, a statute had been made, providing that

none should be received into the Mendicant fraternities, until they should attain the age of eighteen years. But this enactment furnished but a weak defence against the pertinacity of the Friars. Their influence and their wealth were prodigally employed to defeat that regulation : and dispensations were perpetually issuing from Rome, which almost reduced its provisions to a dead letter. The quarrel, accordingly, continued to rage with unabated violence ; till, at length, in 1366, it was found expedient to

Interference of submit it to the decision of the high Parliament. **Court of Parliament.** The result of this application was, a grave and salutary recommendation, that the adverse parties should use each other with all becoming courtesy ; and an injunction, that none of the orders should receive among them any scholar under the age of eighteen years ; that the Friars should take no advantage, nor procure any

bull, or any other process from Rome, against the Universities ; that all controversies between them should be referred to the Crown ; and that all offenders should be punished at the pleasure of the King in Council. Even this measure, however, was insufficient to stop the tide of encroachment ; as an instance of which, it may be mentioned, that nine years afterwards, a bull was actually procured by the Convent of Christ Church, Canterbury, to dispense, in their favour, with a statute of the University, requiring persons to be regents in arts before they proceeded doctors in divinity⁵.

The energy of Wicliif, as the adversary of the Friars and the champion of the ancient institutions, probably recommended him to the Society of ^{1361.} Baliol College, by whom he was presented to the rectory of Fillingham : of Fillingham, a living of considerable value, in the diocese of Lincoln, and in the archdeaconry of Stow ; which he afterwards exchanged, in ^{1368.} which he afterwards exchanged for Lutgershall, in the archdeaconry of Bucks, a living of less value, but of more convenient situation, as being nearer to Oxford. In the same year (1361) he was promoted to the wardenship of ^{1361.} Promoted to the wardenship of Baliol ; which dignity he resigned some ^{1365.} Wicliif appointed to the headship of Canterbury Hall, a society founded about that time by Simon Islep, then founded by Archbishop of Canterbury⁶. This foun-

⁵ Lewis, p. 5, 6. Cotton's Abridgment, p. 102, 103. Collier, i. 560.

⁶ It is stated, in Archbishop Parker's Antiquities of the

dation was designed for a warden and eleven scholars, eight of whom were to be secular clergymen, the remaining four members, including the warden, were to be monks of Christ Church, Canterbury. The office of warden was first conferred on one Wodehall, a turbulent and intractable monk, who had already molested and disquieted the university, by the disorderly violence of his temper⁷. In 1365, for reasons which are not distinctly known,—but probably in consequence of the dissensions occasioned by a mixture of secular and monastic scholars in the same institution,—the founder removed Wodehall and his three monks, and substituted in their place John Wiclit as warden, and three secular clerks, William Selby, William Middleworth, and Richard Benger, to be scholars: and this change he is said to have effected by virtue of a clause in the instrument of foundation, reserving to himself and his successors, the power of removing the warden at pleasure, in a summary manner, without process or form of law⁸.

Church, that Islep appropriated the Rectory of Mayfield, in Sussex, to Canterbury Hall, when he appointed Wiclit to the wardenship: which appropriation was revoked by his successor, Langham, when he ejected Wiclit.

⁷ See Lewis, p. 11, 12.

⁸ “*Absque judiciali strepitu.*” These are the words quoted by Lewis; but he does not give the context in which they occur. Neither can I find this provision in the appendix to the first volume of Vaughan, in which he professes to give all the documents which relate to this case. Dr. Lingard affirms that we are not acquainted with the means by which Wodehall was superseded by Wiclit: but he does not question that he and his monks were removed with the approbation of the founder. Lingard, vol. iv. p. 214, 215.

In 1366, Islep died, and was succeeded by Simon Langham, who was originally a private monk, and afterwards abbot of Westminster ; from which office he was promoted to the bishopric of Ely, and thence, by papal provision, to the primacy. It is not very surprising that one whose discipline and life had been among the religious Orders, should be ready to entertain an appeal against a secular warden of Canterbury Hall. The appointment of Wiclif to that office, by Simon Islep, had been made in language which bore most honourable testimony to his fitness for the post. It was, nevertheless, suggested that this appointment had taken place when Islep was disabled, by infirmity, for the transaction of business ; and that it was, moreover, contrary to the charter of foundation. On this ground, the appointment His appointment of Wiclif was pronounced void by Langham, and one John de Radyngate substituted in his place. The new president, however, held his situation but a very short time ; for, the very next month, Wodehall was restored to the wardenship : and on Wiclif's refusal to render obedience to this order, the archbishop sequestered the revenues of the Hall. Against this sentence Wiclif appeals to the Pope, who ratifies Langham's decree. After a tedious process of about three years, the papal decree came forth ; and, not only ratified the proceedings of Langham, but, in defiance and contempt of the provisions of the original foundation, pronounced that *none but monks* had any right " to remain perpetually " in Canterbury Hall ; that all the secu-

lar scholars should be removed ; that Henry Wodehall, and the other deprived monks, should be restored ; and that perpetual silence should be imposed on Wiclif, and the ejected secular clerks.

The decision confirmed by the gulars seem to have felt their title and crown.

Notwithstanding this decision, the gulars seem to have felt their title and possession insecure, until it had been fortified by the royal approbation ; and this was not obtained until the year 1372. In this remarkable instrument⁹, it is distinctly recited, that the royal licence was originally granted for an establishment, the members of which were to be *partly* secular and *partly* religious ; that this licence was first violated by Islep's substitution of seculars *exclusively* ; and that it was again violated by the papal decree, which transferred the institution *exclusively* to monks. On this it became a question, whether the Hall itself, together with its whole endowment, were not forfeited to the king, of whom the advowson of Pageham, the chief source of its revenue, was held *in capite*. To remedy this doubt, it was thought absolutely necessary to have recourse to the royal confirmation of the Pope's sentence ; and the instrument accordingly proceeds to state, that "in consideration of 200 marks paid by the Prior and Convent of Christ Church, Canterbury," (from which the monkish members were always to be elected,) "all transgressions and forfeitures were pardoned, and the Papal decree ratified and confirmed." On the face of

⁹ It is printed at length in Lewis, p. 297—301, from the MS. at Lambeth. No. 104.

this document, therefore, it appears, that even if the charter of foundation was first violated by Islep¹, it was equally violated afterwards by the court of Rome; but that the latter breach of the royal licence was cured by a substantial bribe to the Crown, amounting in value to between 2000 and 3000 pounds of our present money!

That Wiclif would be indignant at the iniquity of these transactions, may readily be imagined; and, by some, his hatred of the Papal authority has been ascribed to his dissatisfaction and resentment. There might, perhaps, be plausible grounds for this insinuation, if it were clear that his opposition had commenced subsequently to the Pope's decision. But the actual circumstances are wholly adverse to this supposition². In the first place, it never seems to have been doubted that he had, already, been openly committed to hostilities against one enormous abuse, namely, the patronage of the Mendicant orders by the Church of Rome. In the second place, that he had formed a decided opinion respecting certain other Romish abuses, and that this opinion was not disguised while his appeal was still pending, will appear from his conduct relative to

¹ So far as the removal of the warden, and the substitution of Wiclif are concerned, it is doubtful whether the royal licence had been violated by Archbishop Islep. There certainly was no such violation of it, if, as Lewis asserts, it reserved to the founder the right of removing the warden at pleasure, in a summary way, *absque judiciali strepitu*. See Lewis, p. 19, note.

² Even Dr. Lingard allows that the imputation is, *perhaps*, a rash one. Ling. vol. iv. p. 110.

the question of the Pontifical sovereignty over the realm of England ; the claim to which was, at this period, revived by Pope Urban V.

It will be recollectcd, that the foundation for this claim was the surrender of the British crown by king John to Pope Innocent the Third. Nothing, perhaps, could have occurred to scatter more widely, among the people of England, the seeds of disaffection towards the Papal tyranny, than this ignominious transaction. That the submission rendered to it, both by the monarch and the people, was, in all succeeding times, bitterly reluctant, may be concluded from the fact, that the formality of homage was constantly evaded, and that, since the days of Henry III., the tribute of 1000 marks was often

1365. interrupted. In 1365, no less than

The Pope revives his claim of homage and tribute. thirty-three years had elapsed since the last payment had been made; and then, from England.

in an evil hour, when the spirit of the nation was at its highest, the Pope bethought him of demanding the arrears, and, with them, the due performance of feudal homage. On failure to comply, King Edward the Third was apprized that he would be cited by process to appear at the Papal court, there to answer for the default to his civil and spiritual sovereign. The conduct of that monarch

Edward III. lays on this occasion was precisely such as the demand before Parliament, who resolve that it ought to be resisted. became a king of England. He laid the exactions of the Pontiff before his Par-

liament the next year (1366), and desired their advice on the emergency. The answer of the lords spiritual and temporal, and of the Commons of England, to this demand of their sovereign, was

resolute and dignified : “ Forasmuch as neither king John, nor any other king, could bring this realm and kingdom in such thralldom and subjection, but by common consent of Parliament, the which was not done; therefore, that which he did was against his oath at his coronation. If, therefore, the Pope should attempt any thing against the king by process, or other matters in deed, the king, with all his subjects, should, with all their force and power, resist the same.”

This solemn national protest was, of course, deeply resented by the faithful adherents of Rome. Their displeasure was speedily expressed by the pen of an anonymous monk, who, in the following year, 1367, published a *Vindication of the Papal claims*; in which he challenged Wiclif, by name, to confute his arguments in support of those pretensions, and to maintain the recent decision of the Parliament. Now, the bare fact of such a challenge shows that Wiclif was, at that time, publicly known as the determined adversary of Papal encroachment; as the champion, whom, of all others, an advocate of the Romish power would be most anxious to overthrow. And, further, it will appear below, that the reply to the challenge was by no means such as to conciliate the Pontiff, or to secure a favourable issue to his appeal³. On the contrary, the whole of that reply is such as would be most likely to bring the suit precisely to that issue which it actually

³ In the first edition of this work, p. 123, it is *erroneously* stated that the appeal was made in 1365.



reached in 1370 ; in which year, Wiclit was formally deposed, in pursuance of a Papal Bull, dated the 28th May, and addressed to the Bishop of London, the Abbot of St. Alban's, and the Archdeacon of Oxford⁴. The case, therefore, stands thus : In 1366, Langham is advanced to the Primacy, and displaces Wiclit from the wardenship of Canterbury Hall. In 1370, the Pope decides against Wiclit, and confirms the act of Langham. And it is during the interval between 1366 and 1370, while the appeal is pending, that Wiclit replies to a challenger, who had dared him to defend the resolution of the Parliament. These facts are quite inconsistent with the supposition, that Wiclit was impelled to extremities against the Papacy, only by his indignation at the sentence which finally thrust him from his preferment.

Wiclit's reply to the challenge. The performance of his monkish antagonist has not been preserved. But his answer to it is still extant⁵, in the form of a theological "Determination" in Latin; and we may collect from it, that the first object of his adversary was to render Wiclit personally odious at Rome, and thus to prejudice the suit then pending, and to ruin his future professional fortunes; the second, to secure for himself and his order the patronage of the Papal court; and the last, to establish the Papal power in more unlimited licence, and consequently, to effect a more shameless accu-

⁴ Lewis, p. 15, 16.

⁵ It is printed in Lewis, p. 349—360, with the title, "Determinatio quædam Magistri Johannis Wycliff, contra unum Monachum."

mulation of secular domains upon the religious houses⁶. Undeterred by any regard for his own personal interests, Wiclif addresses himself to the demolition of the main strength of his antagonist, which he finds to be collected in the following syllogism : "All dominion, granted under a condition, is, by the violation of the condition, dissolved. But the Lord Pope granted to our king the realm of England, under the condition that England should annually pay 700 marks, which condition has from time to time been disregarded. Therefore, the king of England has long since fallen from the sovereignty of England." It required no great logical sagacity to discover that this argument began by virtually assuming the principal matter in debate ; namely, that the condition was such as one of the high contracting parties had power lawfully to impose, or the other to accept. All, therefore, that remained for Wiclif to do, was to show that the condition in question was intolerable. In the commencement of his paper, he assumes a somewhat ironical tone, from which he would have done better to abstain. For he professes, for his own part, to be an obedient son of the Church, and protests that he is unwilling to make any assertion which may sound injuriously to

⁶ "Tres causæ dictæ sunt mihi, cur homo facit. Primo, ut persona mea, sic ad Romanam Curiam diffamata, et aggravatis censuris, ab ecclesiasticis beneficiis sit privata. Secundo, ut ex hinc sibi et suis benevolentia Romanæ Curiae sit reportata. Et tertio, ut, dominante Domino Papâ regno Angliæ, liberius, copiosius, et voluptuosius, sine freno correptionis fraternæ, sint Abbathiis civilia dominia cumulata." Lewis, p. 351.

⁷ 700 for England, 300 for Ireland.

her honour, or inflict offence on pious ears. He then refers the Reverend Doctor to the solution of the question which he had heard to have been given in a certain assembly of secular lords: and he, accordingly, proceeds to detail the sentiments there expressed by these illustrious counsellors. The first of them, he tells us, declared that tribute could be due only by right of conquest, and that it should be altogether refused unless the Pope could extort it by strength of hand; which if his Holiness should attempt, he (the speaker) would resist in defence of our right. By the next of these senators it was observed, that the Pope ought to be foremost in the following of Christ, who had not where to lay his head: that by the nature of his office, he was absolutely incapacitated for receiving any such impost as he now demanded: that it was their duty to confine the Pope to the observance of his spiritual function, and, consequently, to resist the exaction of civil homage or tribute. If, said the third debater, the Pope be the *servant of the servants of God*, nothing but the performance of service can entitle him to any payment. Service, however, whether temporal or spiritual, we have received none, at the hand of the Pope. His demand of payment must consequently fall, at once, to the ground. A third part, or more, of the land of this kingdom, said the fourth nobleman, is held in mortmain by the Church; that is, by the Pope, who claims to be lord of all the possessions of the Church. It follows, then, that he must hold these lands, either as tenant and vassal of the king, or else as his liege lord and superior. That the king can have any territorial superior within this realm is

contrary to the spirit of all feudal institutions ; since, even when lands are granted in mortmain, the rights of the original lord are invariably reserved. The Pope, therefore, must be the king's vassal ; and, having continually failed to render homage and service, has unquestionably incurred the forfeiture appropriate to such default. On what ground was it, demands the fifth speaker, that this impost was granted by king John ? Was it for the benefit of personal absolution granted to himself, or for the removal of the interdict laid upon his kingdom, or for any forfeiture incurred by the monarch ? If for either of the two former reasons, the transaction was simoniacal and iniquitous. It was simoniacal,—for it savoureth not of the religion of Christ to say, I will absolve thee on condition that you pay me so much monies annually and for ever. It was iniquitous,—for what could be more shameful than to burden the unoffending people with a penalty due only to the sins of the monarch ? But if this mark of servitude were imposed for the last of the above reasons, it must follow that the Pope would, in the most formidable of all senses, be the liege lord of our king. He might, for any pretended forfeiture, and at any time, pluck the crown from the head of our sovereign, and place it on the brow of a creature of his own. And who, adds the speaker, is to resist the beginnings of such encroachment, if we do not ? The goods of the Church, said another, cannot be lawfully alienated without an adequate and reasonable consideration. It is, therefore, monstrous that the Pope should pretend to dispose of a realm so broad and rich for a paltry rent of 700 marks a

year. Besides, if there is to be any sovereign lord of this land above the king, that lord must be no other than Christ himself. The Pope it cannot be; for the Pope is liable to sin: and, according to the doctors of theology, by actually incurring mortal sin, would forfeit all title to dominion. Enough, therefore, it is for us to keep ourselves from mortal sin, and virtuously to share our possessions with the poor, in token of our holding them immediately of Christ, the only sure and all-sufficient liege Lord, instead of acknowledging ourselves dependent on one whose own title must be constantly open to failure and defeat. It was forcibly urged by the last of these speakers, that an improvident stipulation of the king, the result of his own judicial infatuation, and affecting the rights and interests of a whole people, could never be held perpetually binding, unless confirmed by the formal and solemn acquiescence of all orders and estates of the realm. Such plenitude of authority and consent was, in this instance, wanting; the whole transaction, therefore, must be utterly illegitimate and void. From these considerations, thus solemnly urged by the secular counsellors of the nation, Wiclid conceives himself entitled to conclude, that the condition imposed by the Pope, and accepted by king John, was altogether "a vain thing;" and he commends to his reverend adversary the task of proving it to be otherwise. "But if I mistake not," he adds in conclusion, "the day will first arrive in which every exaction shall cease, before the doctor will be able to establish that a stipulation, such as this, can ever be consistent either with honesty or with reason."

It is not, perhaps, very easy to decide, whether Wiclid is here to be considered as reporting the substance of a debate which had actually taken place in the House of Peers, relative to the demands of the Pope⁸, or whether he is merely putting into the mouths of fictitious and imaginary speakers, such arguments as would naturally suggest themselves to intelligent and patriotic men. But however this may be, it has been said that this "Determination" of the Reformer, "does more honour to his loyalty as a subject, than to his abilities as a scholar or a divine⁹." His abilities, indeed, are not displayed to much advantage in this piece, considered as a specimen of artificial rhetoric, or finished composition. The style, it must be allowed, is sufficiently barbarous and rugged,—a circumstance not very surprising, when it is remembered, that, in those days, the classic graces were little cultivated, and indeed, scarcely known. If, however, the performance is to be estimated by its fitness to produce the desired impression on the public mind, it will be found not more creditable to his loyalty, than to his capacity and address. With a view to the purposes contemplated by him, we can scarcely imagine a happier form than that into which he has thrown the mul-

⁸ It is clear that he does not pretend to have been present at the discussion. His words are, "— transmittit Doctorem meum reverendum ad solutionem hujus argumenti, *quam audiui* in quodam Concilio a Dominis Secularibus *esse datam*. Primus autem Dominus, in armis plus strenuus, *fertur* taliter respondisse, &c. &c." Lewis, p. 351.

⁹ Lingard, vol. iv. p. 215, note 194.

tiplied objections to these insufferable claims. On such an occasion, and for such objects, the peculiar clerk and chaplain to the king¹ could scarcely do better than throw aside, for a time, the person of a mere professional disputant, and appeal,—as it were *dramatically*,—to the understanding of his readers, in the language of senators and of statesmen.

It is further asserted, that this paper “is *chiefly* remarkable for containing the germ of those doctrines, which afterwards involved Wiclif in so much trouble ; namely, that dominion is founded on grace, and that the clergy ought not to hold temporal possessions².” With regard to the doctrine that dominion is founded in grace, there is but one allusion to it in the whole document. It occurs in the argument of the sixth speaker ; and there it appears in the form of an appeal to principles more or less current among the theologians of the age³. That the clergy were not invested with a full and unconditional right of property in their endowments, and that the Church might have been better without any endowments at all, are opinions which were, undoubtedly, maintained by Wiclif. Such opinions, however, are but very obscurely intimated in the

¹ So he describes himself in his *Determination* : “Ego cum sim *peculiaris Regis Clericus*, talis qualis, volo libenter induere habitum responsalis, defendendo et suadendo quod Rex potest justè dominari regno Angliæ, negando tributum Romano Pontifici.”

² Lingard, vol. iv. p. 215, note 194.

³ “Papa, dum fuerit in peccato mortali, *secundum Theologos*, caret dominio.” Lewis, p. 354.

paper before us ; the main object of which is to show that no ecclesiastic, however exalted, can have a right to extort tribute from a foreign country. But these are points which will occasionally meet us again in the course of this narrative.

CHAPTER IV.

1367—1377.

Petition of Parliament that Ecclesiastics should not hold offices of State—Answer of the King—Probable effect of Wiclif's opinions respecting this question—His sentiments on the employment of the Clergy in secular offices—He becomes a Doctor of Divinity, and lectures on Divinity at Oxford—His Exposition of the Decalogue—Notice of his “Pore Caitiff”—Notice of the struggles of this Country against Papal exaction—Papal Provisions—Statute of Provisors, and of Premunire—Wiclif sent as Ambassador to the Pope—Presented to the Prebend of Aust and the Rectory of Lutterworth—Wiclif summoned to appear before the Convocation at St. Paul's—He is protected by John of Gaunt—His appearance at St. Paul's—The tumultuous scene which followed—Death of Edward III., and accession of Richard II.—Further complaints of the Parliament against the Pope—Question, “whether the treasure of the kingdom might not be detained, although required by the Pope”—Wiclif's opinion.

NOTHING is clearly or positively known respecting the life, the studies, and the pursuits of Wiclif, during the interval which elapsed between his vindication of the independence of his country, and the year 1371, which was memorable for another assault upon the honours and privileges of churchmen. In

1371. that year, a petition was presented by Petition of Parliament that ecclesiastics should not hold offices of State. the Parliament to the king, requesting the exclusion of ecclesiastical persons from offices of State, which, at that time, were almost entirely engrossed by the clergy,

conformably to a practice which had generally prevailed in Europe, ever since the conversion of the western nations to the Christian faith. In those times, learning and intelligence were, in a great measure, confined to ecclesiastics. Throughout many a generation, it would have been vain to seek among the laity for persons qualified for the execution of functions requiring the most elementary of those accomplishments, which are now diffused almost throughout every class of the community. The ignorant heroes of the feudal ages positively gloried in their utter destitution of all "clerk-like" qualifications. To write and read were regarded by them as despicable vanities, which dishonoured a warrior, and degraded him to the level of a monk¹. With the capricious inconsistency which often marks the semibarbarian, they cherished a feeling of disdain for arts, the want of which kept them in a state of humiliation, and placed them at the mercy of a profession alternately the object of their derision and their fears. So long as this habit of thought or feeling prevailed, the highest secular responsibilities would, naturally and unavoidably, devolve upon the sacerdotal orders. In the four-

¹ Every reader will at once call to mind the words of the Douglas in *Marmion* :

— by heaven it liked me ill
When the king praised his clerkly skill.
Thanks to St. Bothan, son of mine,
Save Gawain, ne'er could pen a line.
So said I, and so say I still,
Let my boy Bishop fret his fill.

teenth century, however, these days of ignorance and weakness were evidently passing away. The anomaly of consigning the offices of judicature, and the cares of State, to a class of persons, whose function pledged them to the guardianship of man's spiritual and eternal interests, was *beginning* to undergo an unsparing scrutiny. The world were no longer content to see both Church and State placed under the control of the mitre and the cowl. It was no longer thought an ordinance of Nature or of Providence, that the seals of judicial or political office should be borne by spiritual dignitaries. People began to think it strange that the Chancery and the Exchequer should be occupied by functionaries who were ordained to a ministry abhorrent from secular chicanery and litigation. Still less could they comprehend the usage which consigned the care of royal wardrobes or buildings to ecclesiastical surveyors, or placed the kitchen and the larder under the control of a *ghostly clerk*!

These customs, however, retreated but slowly before the advancing intelligence of the age. In the Answer of the present instance, the answer of the king. king was, that he would deal with the petition of Parliament conformably to the advice of his council. His advisers, it would seem, did not venture to recommend an entire disregard of this popular feeling ; for, in the course of a few weeks, the celebrated William of Wykeham resigned the great seal, and the Bishop of Exeter retired from the office of treasurer. This success, however, was but partial and temporary. Little permanent impression was

made by it on the obnoxious practice², which continued, with slight interruption, till nearly the middle of the seventeenth century. Of the ecclesiastics who sat in the Court of Chancery, Bishop Williams was the last. Of clerical statesmen, only one instance occurs subsequently to that of Laud, who partly owed his ruin to the jealousy occasioned by his supposed intrusion into the political councils of his sovereign. So inveterate, however, was this practice, that, when he retired from the management of the treasury, he seemed still to be utterly unconscious that the fiscal office was at all unfit for a churchman, and accordingly laboured to procure it for Bishop Juxon ; and he expressed the highest satisfaction when he succeeded in transferring it to such able and upright administration. Since that time, no high political function has, in this kingdom, been entrusted to an ecclesiastic. On the continent, the usage survived considerably longer.

The want of certainty as to the dates of Wiclid's various writings, renders it impossible to ascertain

² The same tendency in the Clergy to desecrate themselves by every species of secular occupation is denounced, more than a century and a half later, by old Latimer, with his usual bluntness. "It is to be lamented that the prelates, and other spiritual persons, will not attend upon their offices. They will not be among their flocks, but will, rather, run hither and thither, here and there, where they are not called, and in the mean season, leave them at adventure, of whom they take their living. Yea, and furthermore, some would rather be *clerks of the kitchen*, or take other offices upon them beside that which they have already. But, with what conscience these same do so, I cannot tell!"—Sermons, p. 171, quoted in Vaughan, vol. i. p. 317, note 22.

whether his labours could have had any influence on the public feeling which manifested itself in the petition of Parliament above adverted to. It is certain, however, that the tenor of that petition was in full accordance with the sentiments expressed in certain of his extant compositions. For instance,—the treatise entitled “The Regimen of the Church,” (which, if not Wiclif’s own composition, is probably a compilation from his writings,) may be said almost to

Sentiments of Wiclif on the employment of the Clergy in secular offices. echo the language of the Parliament of 1371 :—“ Neither Prelates, nor Doctors, nor Deacons, should hold secular offices ; that is, those of the Chancery,

Treasury, Privy Seal, and other such secular offices in the Exchequer ; neither be Land-stewards nor Stewards of Hall, nor *Clerks of Kitchen*, nor Clerks of Accounts ; neither be occupied in any secular office in Lords’ Courts ; more especially while secular men are able to do such offices³.” The inconsistency of such occupations with the spiritual function, is exposed by reference to the authority of St. Gregory, St. Chrysostom, and St. Jerome, and of the apostolic decrees. He further appeals to the language of St. Paul to the Corinthian Church, and to the admonition of our Lord, addressed to His disciples. In another of his tracts, he complains that “ prelates, and great religious professioners are so occupied in heart about

³ For this, and the following extract, I am indebted to the diligence of Mr. Vaughan. See vol. i. p. 314. The passage quoted above is from the *Ecclesiæ Regimen*. Cotton MSS. Titus, D. i. There is a second copy of this Treatise among the MSS. of Trinity College, Dublin ; which, however, was mislaid when Mr. Vaughan wished to examine it.

worldly lordships, and with pleas of business, that no habit of devotion, of praying, of thoughtfulness on heavenly things, on the sins of their own heart, or those of other men, may be preserved ; neither may they be found studying and preaching of the Gospel, nor visiting and comforting of poor men." And the effect of this desertion of their sacred ministry he describes to be, that the churchmen, who are suffered to become " rich clerks of Chancery, of the Common Bench, and King's Bench, and the Exchequer, and Justices, and Sheriffs, and Stewards, and Bailiffs," contract, at last, such habits of worldliness, as must utterly disqualify them for rebuking, with authority, the worldliness of other people. And, accordingly, in the complaint preferred by him, several years later, to the King and Parliament, he says, " Our Priests ben so busy about worldly occupations, that they seemen better bailiffs, or reves, than ghostly Priests of Jesu Christ." Such was the prevalence of this admixture of sacred and profane employments, that it would seem to have had not only the sanction of the Crown, but the approbation and encouragement of the lay patrons ; who are represented by the Reformer as diverting clerks from their holy calling, by appointing them to hold " vain offices in their courts," and thus deterring the more conscientious among them from accepting spiritual benefices⁴. It would be

⁴ This passage is taken from a MS. in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, beginning with the words,—" For three skills [reasons] lords should constrain Clerks to live in meekness, poverty, and ghostly travail." Vaughan, vol. i. p. 315.

⁵ In his Tract on the question, " Why poor Priests have no benefices."

difficult to assign the exact time when Wiclif began openly to reprobate these practices. But the above extracts are, at least, sufficient to place him among those who, in that age, were impatient of such abuses, and who were labouring for their correction.

In the year 1372, Wiclif, then in the Wiclif becomes forty-eighth year of his age, took the Doctor of Divinity degree of Doctor of Divinity, and began to read lectures in theology at Oxford.

His authority in the chair is said to have been almost oracular. If, however, those of his scholastic performances which have been preserved, were the only fruits of his labour as a public teacher, they would, probably, do but little, in modern judgments, to justify so high an estimate of his powers. There are, fortunately, other remains of his, which may, with some probability, be referred to this period of life, and which are much better fitted to make good his claim to the peculiar title of the Evangelic Doctor. For example,—among his extant works we find an Exposition of the Decalogue ; a vigorous and scriptural statement of the Laws of the Two Tables, in the English tongue. In the present day, this may seem to us no mighty achievement for a doctor of such high renown. But, still, it may easily be imagined that, in those times, such a work might be of no ordinary value and importance. He himself tells us, in his preface, that it was, then, no uncommon thing for men “ to call God Master, forty, three-score, or fourscore years, and yet to remain ignorant of his Ten Commandments.” And, when the commandments were known, the priesthood of the time was, too often, at hand, to point out some *refuge of*

lies, in which the transgressor might be safe from the penalty. To lay the Divine law before the world, in all its purity and sovereignty, was, in such an age, one of the noblest services which a teacher could render to the Church. The following is a specimen of Wiclit's faithful and homely style of inculcation : "Covet not thy neighbour's goods, despise him not, slander him not, deceive him not, scorn him not, belie him not, backbite him not ; the which is a common custom now-a-days : and so, in all other things, do no otherwise than thou wouldest reasonably that he did to thee. But many think if they give a penny to a pardoner, they shall be forgiven the breaking of all the commandments of God, and therefore they take no heed how they keep them. *But I say to thee for certain*, though thou have priests and friars to sing for thee, and though thou each day hear many masses, and found chantries and colleges, and go on pilgrimages all thy life, and give all thy goods to pardons : all this shall not bring thy soul to heaven. While, if the commandments of God are revered to the end, though neither penny nor halfpenny be possessed, there shall be everlasting pardon and bliss of heaven." From the following extract it will appear he had not dismissed from his system the belief of purgatory. But then, it is likewise evident, from the language of this passage, especially when combined with that of the foregoing, that he considered purgatory as a place of intermediate suffering, beyond the reach of all human controul or dispensation. "God," he desires us to remember, "is all-just ; why ? because he rewardeth all good deeds, and punisheth all trespasses in due time, and in due measure, both secret and

open ; neither may *any creature* resist his punishing, whether in earth, or in purgatory, or in hell⁶." That, in his representation of our condition, as moral beings, he had perpetual and faithful reference to the One Great Sacrifice, is obvious from these words : " Have a remembrance of the goodness of God, how he made thee in his own likeness ; and how Jesus Christ, both God and man, died so painful a death upon the cross, *to buy man's soul out of hell*, even with his own heart's blood, and to bring it to the bliss of heaven⁷." And again, after dwelling on the bitter agonies endured by the Saviour, he adds, " Thou shouldst think, constantly, how, when he had made thee out of nought, thou hadst forsaken him and all his kindness through sin ; and hadst taken thee to Satan and his service, world without end, had not Christ, God and man, suffered this hard death to save us. And then, see the great kindness, and all other goodness which Christ hath shewn thee : and thereby learn thy own great unkindness ; and then thou shalt see that *man is the most fallen of creatures*, and the unkindest of all the creatures that ever God made. It *should* be full sweet and delightful to us to think thus on this great kindness, and this great love of Jesus Christ⁸." Among the most crying enormities of those times, may be reckoned the habitual profaneness which infected the language of the laity, and which, to say the least, received no effectual discountenance from the higher dignitaries of the Church. Wiclif himself, in his treatise of prelates⁹, describes

⁶ Vaughan, vol. i. p. 326.

⁷ Ibid. p. 322.

⁸ Ibid. p. 327.

⁹ Cited in Lewis, p. 39, 40.

the abbot or prior, riding "with four-score horse, with harness of silver and gold, and many ragged and *fittred* squires, and other men, swearing *heart, and nails, and bones, and other members of Christ.*" And we learn from Chaucer¹, that men often seemed to glory "in swering, and held it a *gentery*, and a manly deed, to swere great oathes, all be the cause not worth a straw." Against this habit Wiclif protests most vehemently in his Exposition. "For the love of Christ," he exclaims, "who for you shed his blood, beware, henceforth, night and day, of your oathes"

¹ Parson's Tale, p. 183, ed. 1687. And, again, he gives us the following scene :

Our host on his stirrups stode anon ;
 Sir Parish Priest (quod he) for *God's bones*,
 Tell us a tale.
 I see well that ye learned men in lore
 Can muckle good, by *Goddis dignitie*.
 The Parson him answered, *Benedicote*,
 What eileth the man, so sinfully to swear ?
 Our host answered, O Jenkin, be ye there ?
 Now, good men (quod our host) harkneth to me :
I smell a Loller in the wind, (quod he).
 Abideth for God's digne passion,
 For we shall have a predication.
 This Loller here will preachen us somewhat.

SQUIRE'S PROLOGUE, p. 47, ed. 1687.

So general was the practice, that Knyghton also mentions the abstinence from such blasphemies as one sure symptom of Lollardy. De Event. Angl. p. 2706. And it does, unquestionably, appear that the Lollards carried their scruples to a ridiculous excess. They held it unlawful to swear, on any occasion, *by a creature* ; and, therefore, they refused to swear *by a book* ! See W. Thorpe's Examination, Wordsw. Eccl. Biogr. vol. i. p. 186.

swearing." It was sometimes suggested, that a frequent, even though somewhat irreverent, use of God's holy name, is a proof that we hold him constantly in our remembrance. This worthless apology he exposes to scorn, by shewing that a man might just as reasonably pretend to honour his prince, by the frequent repetition of his name, even "though it might be to betray him, or teach others to despise him." To appeal to inveterate custom as a vindication, he affirmed to be precisely as if a thief should plead his long habits of plunder, in palliation of a detected robbery. To infer from the mercy of God, that "he will not damn men for a light oath," is, in effect, to forget, that only for eating an apple "against the forbidding of God, Adam, and all mankind, were justly condemned, until Christ bought them again, with his precious blood, and hard death upon the cross²."

Notice of Wiclf's 'Pore Caitiff.' To these extracts may be added a noble passage from Wiclf's other Treatise on the Commandments, which appears in a work of his, entitled "The Pore Caitiff," a collection of small tracts, written in English, as the author declares, for the purpose of "teaching simple men and women the way to heaven;" and which, as Mr. Baber remarks, may, with propriety, be termed the Poor Man's Library. In his exposition of the first and second commandments, he says, "Let each

² For the above extracts from the Exposition of the Decalogue, I am indebted to Mr. Vaughan, who has examined the MS. in the British Museum.

³ The word 'caitiff' is no other than the Italian word *cattivo*, a captive, and is used to signify any one in an abject or wretched condition.

man look into his own conscience, upon what he most sets his liking and thought, and what he is most busy about to please, and that thing he loveth most, whatsoever it be : and what thing a man loveth most, that thing he maketh his god. Thus, each man wilfully using deadly sin, makes himself a false god, by turning away his love from God to the lust of the sin which he useth. And thus, when man or woman forsakes meekness, the meekness which Christ Jesus commandeth, and gives himself to highness and pride, he makes the fiend his god, for *he* is king over all proud folk, as we read in the book of Job. And so the envious man and woman have hatred and vengeance for their god. And the idle man hath sloth and slumber for his god. The covetous man and woman make worldly goods their god ; for covetousness is the root of all evils, and serveth to idols, as to false gods, as St. Paul saith. Gluttonous and drunken folk make their belly their god, for the love and care they have for it, as St. Paul witnesseth. And so, lecherous folk make them a false god, for the foul delight and lust that reigneth in them. Thus every man and woman, using deadly sin, breaks this first commandment, worshippung false gods. Therefore, saith the great clerk, Groshead, that each man who doeth deadly sin, runneth from or forsaketh the true God, and worshippeth a false god. All such are false gods to rest upon, and cannot deliver themselves, nor their worshippers, from the vengeance of the Almighty God, at the dreadful doom, as God himself declarereth by his prophets⁴."

⁴ "The Pore Caitiff," with other portions of Wiclid's writings, hitherto in manuscript, have been recently printed by

At the time that this language was uttered, we should recollect, the subtleties of the schoolmen had combined with the grosser corruptions of the Papacy, in weaving snares, and digging pitfalls, for the feet of the unwary and the ignorant. And therefore it is, that the Reformer, in his prologue to the commandments, exhorts his readers to look at the divine testimonies with a constant view to the amendment of their lives, and to cast away from them the sophistries, by which the precursors of Loyola had, even then, been labouring to *make the law of God of none effect*. “Let every man and woman,” he says, “who desires to come speedily to the life that lasts for ever, do his business, with all strength of body and soul, to keep these commandments; and scorn all arguments of false flatterers and heretics, who, both in work and word, despise these commandments, saying that it is not lawful to be busy in the keeping of them; yea, and saying that it is needful sometimes to break them.” And then he goes on to compare this unhallowed rivalry between the craft of man and the wisdom of God, to the accursed sorceries with which the sages of Pharaoh presumed to emulate the works, and to resist the power, of Jehovah.

The “Pore Caitiff” is further interesting, as a specimen of Wiclif’s talent for popular exposition and illustration. This faculty is signally displayed by him, in his Section on “the Armour of Heaven, or of Ghostly Battle.” “Man’s body,” he there

the Religious Tract Society, in a volume, entitled, “The Writings of the Rev. and learned John Wiclif.” The above extract will be found in p. 63 of that compilation,

observes, “is as a horse that bears his rider through many perils. But it were great folly for any man to fight upon an unbridled horse: and if the horse be wild and ill-broken, the bridle must be heavy and the bit sharp, to hold him in. This bridle is abstinence, with which his master shall restrain him to be meek, and bow to his will. The bridle, however, must be managed by wisdom; for else the horse will fail at the greatest need, and harm his master, and make him lose his victory. Further, this bridle must have two reins, both strong, and even, so that neither pass the other in length. The one rein is too loose when thou lettest thy flesh have his will too much. The other is held too strait, when thou art too stern against thine own flesh; for then thou destroyest his strength and might, so that, to help thee as it should, it may not. Therefore, sustain thy horse that he faint not, neither fail thee at thy need; and withdraw from him that which might turn thee to folly.

“That thy seat may be both stedfast and seemly, thy horse needs to have a saddle: and this saddle is no other than *mansuetude*, or meekness of spirit, whereby thou mayest encounter all the roughness and peril of the way with the semblance of ease and mildness. This virtue of mildness of heart and appearance makes man gracious to God, and seemly to man’s sight, as a well fitted saddle maketh a horse seemly and praiseable.

“Two spurs it is needful that thou have, and that they be sharp, to prick thy horse if needful, that he loiter not by the way; and these two spurs are love and dread. The *right* spur is the love that

God's dear children have for the weal that shall never end. The *left* spur is the dread of the pains of *purgatory* and of hell, which are without number, and never may be told out. And if the right spur of love be not sharp enough to make him go forward in his journey, prick him with the left spur of dread, to rouse him."

This sort of homely and familiar imagery, followed up, as it is in this tract, with all the urgency of solemn exhortation, is admirably adapted both to win, and to fix, the attention of plain unlettered men. And that "the Pore Caitiff" was highly prized as a work of popular usefulness, appears from the care that was taken to preserve and circulate it⁵.

Notice of the ~~struggles of this country against Papal exaction.~~ The testimony which Wiclif was incessantly lifting up against the Romish oppressions and exactions, was, at this time, in full harmony with the tone of public feeling throughout the nation. From the days of the Con-

⁵ The following note, which is written at the end of one of the manuscripts of the "Pore Caitiff," in the British Museum, (MS. Harl. 2335,) shows the value attached to it in the period preceding the Reformation, and the methods resorted to for its circulation :

"This book was made of the goods of John Gamalin, for a common profit, that the person that has this book committed to him of the person that had power to commit it, have the use thereof for the time of his life, praying for the soul of the same John : and that he that hath this aforesaid use of the commission, when he occupieth it not, leave he it, for a time, to some other person. Also, that the person to whom it was committed for the term of life, under the foresaid conditions, deliver it to another for the term of his life. And so be it delivered and committed from person to person, man or woman, so long as the book endureth."

queror, to that hour, a struggle had been carried on between the sovereignty of England, and the supremacy of Rome. The spirit of our nobles, and even of our churchmen, would often manifest itself by loud and indignant outcries, when the hand of the plunderer was upon them. But the work of pillage, nevertheless, went on ; till, at last, the impoverishment and ignominy which it inflicted became too great for endurance.

One process by which the life-blood of the country was drained out, was the practice of Papal provisions. Papal provision ; a prerogative, by virtue of which the Pontiff, at his pleasure, could declare the next vacancy of any ecclesiastical benefice or dignity in the kingdom, to be at his own disposal. The effect of this custom was to waste an enormous portion of the revenues of the Church upon foreigners, often the worthless creatures of the Pope ; men, and frequently boys, who neither knew the language, nor touched the soil, of the realm upon whose resources they were thriving. Another consequence was, the frequency of appeals to Rome, by which the jurisdiction of the royal courts was contemptuously, and most perniciously, invaded. The year 1350 was rendered memorable by the establishment of two noble bulwarks against these usurpations. The celebrated Statute of Provisors, declared void any collation to dignity or Statutes of Provisors, and of Premunire. benefice, which should be at variance with the rights of the king, the chapters, or any other patron. The Statute of Premunire forbade, under the severest penalties, the introduction or circulation of bulls or mandates, prejudicial to the king

or people; and all appeals to the Papal Court, in questions of property, from the judgment of the English tribunals.

The subsequent complaints of Parliament, nevertheless, show that, hitherto, the enactments of temporal legislatures were, to the strength of Rome, but *as a thread of tow when it toucheth the fire*. In

1373. 1373 the declining and feeble monarch

was again assailed by the clamours of his subjects; and the result was, an almost abortive embassy to Avignon, (where Gregory XI. then resided,) to obtain redress of those grievances and insults, which, in defiance of the two laws above mentioned, were still heaped upon the Church and State

of England. In the following year an

1374. enquiry was instituted into the number and value of English benefices, then occupied by Frenchmen, Italians, and other aliens; and the result exhibited an extent of abuse, which demanded one more vigorous effort. Another embassy was accordingly resolved on, in order to renew negotiations with the court of Rome. The name of Wiclf

Wiclf sent as an Ambassador to the Pope. appears second on the commission ap- pointed for that purpose; a circumstance

which manifests, beyond all question, the height of his reputation. The seat of these conferences was fixed at Bruges,—a city of great extent, and high commercial grandeur; and, moreover, at a very convenient distance from the Papal Court; for the spiritual governors of the world seem, in those days, to have been most wisely reluctant to expose the manners and habits of themselves or their dependants to the close inspection of

enlightened or virtuous strangers. The usual chicanery of the Romish policy, together with the increasing infirmities and ruined influence of Edward III., protracted these negotiations for a period of two years ; and, after all, deprived them of any effectual result. Their first fruits were a series of bulls, issued in September, 1375, containing a very partial remedy of the alleged enormities ; and their final issue was an agreement that, in future, the Pope should desist from reservations ; and that the King should desist from conferring benefices by his writ of *Quare Impedit*. Respecting the independence of the Chapters on Papal Confirmation, in the exercise of their right of election, not a syllable is to be found in the treaty. And that something like treachery had crept into the proceedings would appear from the fact, that John, Bishop of Bangor, who was at the head of the commission, was translated, by the Pope's bull, to Hereford, in 1375, and thence to St. David's, by the same authority, in 1389 ⁶. One beneficial consequence, however, most probably must have resulted from the proceeding. It must have opened to Wiclif more distinctly the serpentine mysteries of Pontifical diplomacy. It must have brought his eye somewhat closer to the deformities of the Papal dominion ; and must have moved his spirit to a sterner conflict with it. That he enjoyed the unabated respect and confidence of his sovereign, during these services, may be concluded from the circumstance, that, in November, he was presented by the Crown to the Prebend of Aust, in the Collegiate Church of Westbury, within the diocese

⁶ Lewis, p. 34, note (a).

1375.
Wiclif presented
to the Prebend of
Aust, and the
Rectory of Lut-
terworth.

of Worcester; and, some time afterwards, to the Rectory of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, an appointment which, for that turn, devolved on the Crown, in consequence of the minority of the patron, Lord Henry de Ferrars.

1377.

The year 1377 was remarkable for the first open eruption of that displeasure which Wiclif had been long heaping up for himself by his labours for the Reformation of the Church. The English hierarchy felt themselves, at last, called upon to silence and to chastise him. And, accordingly, in the Convocation held on the 3rd of February, 1377⁷, a citation was issued for his appearance at St. Paul's, before his ordinary, on the nineteenth day of the same month, on a charge of maintaining and publishing a variety of erroneous doctrines. Wiclif was now placed in circumstances of imminent peril; and it was fortunate, both for him, and for his cause, that he enjoyed, at that time, the countenance and patronage of the Duke of Lancaster. It would be vain, at this day, to search for the origin of his connexion with that ambitious prince. The existence of such connexion, however, is not a matter of surprise. The duke was notoriously adverse to the overbearing pretensions of the Papacy. It might, therefore, be expected, that his notice would be attracted by the abilities of a renowned Divine,

⁷ Mr. Vaughan has shown that Lewis is mistaken in assigning 1378 as the date of this proceeding.

almost incessantly employed in opposition to the same power. That Wiclif was not unknown at court so early as 1367, or 1368, is obvious, from the circumstance that, in his *Vindication of the Resistance to the Papal Census*, he writes himself Chaplain to the King⁸. The *Vindication* itself would, very naturally, recommend him further to the good opinion of the duke. And it is, moreover, tolerably certain, that his notions respecting the incongruity between secular office and the clerical character, were in agreement with those of John of Gaunt. And, lastly, his residence at Bruges might have brought him into still more immediate intercourse with the duke, who was there at the same time, as ambassador on the part of England, to conduct certain negotiations, then pending with France, under the mediation of the Pope. All these circumstances, taken together, may sufficiently account for the appearance of this illustrious personage, as the friend and protector of Wiclif, in the hour of his danger. It is, however, by no means impossible, that he may have been influenced, not solely by his hatred of ecclesiastical power, but partly by his personal aversion to Courtney, Bishop of London, who had shown himself a determined adversary of the duke in the parliamentary proceedings of the last year.

On the day appointed for his appearance at St. Paul's, Wiclif was attended to St. Paul's by the Duke of Lancaster, and by Lord Henry Percy, who was the Earl Marshal in 1377. The scene which

⁸ *Peculiaris Regis Clericus.*

The tumultuous scene which followed. ensued was exceedingly tumultuous. An immense concourse was collected in the

church to witness the proceedings ; and it was not without the greatest difficulty, that a passage could be made through the crowd for Wiclit and his distinguished companions to approach the spot where the prelates were assembled. The Bishop of London, on observing the impatience with which the Earl Marshal was forcing his way, and not, perhaps, highly gratified by seeing the delinquent so powerfully attended, told the earl, peremptorily, that "if he had known what *maistries* he would have kept in the church, he would have stopped him out from coming there." This address was instantly resented by "the fiery duke," who replied to the bishop, that "he would keep such maistry there, though he said nay." The parties, at last, struggled through, to our lady's chapel, behind the high altar, where the archbishop (Sudbury), the Bishop of London, and other prelates, were assembled, together with several noblemen, who had resorted thither to witness the proceedings. When Wiclit came into the presence of his judges, and stood before them to make answer as to the charges which might be produced against him, the Earl Marshal desired him to be seated ; an indulgence which the fatigues of the day would render reasonable, and almost necessary. The Bishop of London, however, objected to the permission ; declaring "that it was not according to law or reason, that he, which was cited to appear before his ordinary, should sit down during the time of his answer, but should stand." Upon these words, much angry altercation ensued ;

in the course of which the duke began to assail the bishop with violent menaces, and told him that “he would bring down the pride not only of him, but of all the prelacy of England :” and added, “ thou bearest thyself so brag upon thy *parents*, which shall not be able to help thee : they shall have enough to do to help themselves.” The *parents* of the bishop were the Earl and Countess of Devonshire : and yet it would seem, he was able to keep his noble blood from rebelling at this imperious threat ; for his reply was singularly moderate and wise : he declared that, in truth, “ his confidence was not in his parents, nor in any man else, but only in God—in whom he trusted.” The *soft answer* failed, in this case, to *turn away wrath*. The passion of the duke overcame both his prudence and his sense of propriety (a circumstance not very unusual even in those days of chivalrous courtesy) ; and he vented his indignation by saying, in a low voice, to his next neighbour, that “ he would rather pluck the bishop by the hair of his head out of the church, than he would take this at his hand.” The words were not so gently uttered, but they reached the ears of some of the Londoners near him. The duke was at that time far from popular with the citizens. He was not free from suspicion of some design upon their liberties. They had, moreover, been thrown into a state of some excitement by the display of angry feelings which they had witnessed. Hence, the vindictive language of the duke set them instantly in a flame ; and they cried out that they would lose their lives rather than see their bishop so treated. On this, the uproar became general : the assembly was broken

up in disorder ; and the process against Wiclif was, for a time, suspended⁹. The tumult of the day, however, did not end here : all London was speedily in confusion. A band of rioters proceeded, the next day, to the Savoy, the Duke of Lancaster's palace, one of the most princely structures in the kingdom, reversed his arms as those of a traitor, and massacred a clergyman, whom they mistook for the Earl Marshal. The mob was at last dispersed by the exertions of the Bishop of London ; the Mayor and Aldermen were removed from their offices, and their places are said to have been filled by the duke with dependents of his own.

June, 1377. On the 21st of June, 1377, Edward Death of Edward III., and accession of Richard II. breathed his last, and the first Parliament of his grandson, Richard II., assembled in October following. It appears from the rolls, that they continued to clamour against the Further complaints of the Parliament against the Pope. They complained that English benefices to the annual amount of 6000*l.* were held by Frenchmen. They prayed that the collecting of first-fruits, and the procuring of Papal

⁹ It has been objected against Wiclif, that he did not " protest against the disorderly and insolent behaviour of his patrons." (Milner's Church History, vol. iv. p. 115.) The behaviour of Wiclif's patrons may have been exceptionable enough ; but, surely, it may be presumed that, if Wiclif did not interfere, it was because the tumult and violence of the scene were such as to make all interference, on his part, hopeless and nugatory. It is scarcely fair to raise up unfavourable surmises out of a merely negative circumstance like this.

provisions within this kingdom, might be punished by outlawry ; that all aliens, as well religious as others, should be compelled to avoid the realm ; and that, *during the war*, all their lands and goods should be appropriated in aid of its expenses¹. The war here mentioned was among the *blessings* entailed upon his people by Edward's passion for military renown. The drain of national treasure which it occasioned, was ruinous beyond all precedent ; and, subsequently, exposed the Crown to persevering and indignant remonstrance from the Commons. Even at this time, the pressure was so severely felt as to raise the question, in Parliament, “whether the kingdom of England, on an imminent necessity of its own defence, might lawfully detain the treasure of the kingdom, whether the treasure of the kingdom might not be detained, although required by the Pope.

the kingdom, that it be not carried out of the land ; although the Lord Pope required it, on pain of censures, and by virtue of the obedience due to him².” On what precise occasion this momentous point was mooted, is not certainly known. It has been surmised that the Pope, encouraged by the prospect of weakness and dissension, incident to the accession of a minor, had revived the exaction of Peter-pence, the payment of which had been peremptorily forbidden by Edward III. The terms in which the question was proposed were, however, quite large enough virtually to determine, if answered in the affirmative, that the whole load of Papal exactions might be rightfully shaken off, in utter defiance of Pontifical

¹ Cotton's Abridgment, p. 160. 162. Lewis, p. 55.

² Lewis, p. 54, 55.

censure. It has been said that the matter was referred to the casuistry of Wiclid³. Be this as it may, a paper on the subject is still extant, which has been ascribed to him ; and in which, an appeal is made at

once to the Divine law. In the first Wiclid's paper on payments to the Pope. place it affirms, in substance, that by

the ordinance of God, the principle of self-preservation, which belongs to individual creatures, is, likewise, clearly extended to communities : and that, consequently, our kingdom may lawfully reserve its treasure for its own defence, whenever its exigencies may be such as to render the measure necessary. The same conclusion, it is *secondly* asserted, may be drawn from the law of the Gospel. The Pope “cannot challenge the treasure of this kingdom but under the title of alms ; and consequently, under the title of works of mercy, according to the rules of charity ;” and, by these very rules, “it were no work of charity but mere madness,” to waste our resources upon foreigners, already wallowing in opulence, while the realm itself is sinking under domestic taxation, and in danger of falling into ruin. These considerations alone might be amply sufficient to set the question at rest : but Wiclid seizes the opportunity of protesting generally, against the cupidity and lordliness of him who called himself the Vicar of Christ, and yet was not ashamed to load himself with the spoil of kingdoms. The affirmative of this question, he says, “appeareth also by this, that Christ, the head of the Church, whom all Christians ought to

³ This is affirmed by Lewis ; but, apparently, on the sole authority of Fox. Ibid.

follow, lived by the alms of devout women. Luke vii. 8. He hungered and thirsted, he was a stranger, and many other miseries he sustained, not only in his members, but also in his own body, as the Apostle witnesseth. 2 Cor. viii. 9. *He was made poor for your sakes, that through his poverty you might be rich:* whereby, in the first endowing of the Church, whatsoever he were of the clergy that had any temporal possessions, he had the same as a *perpetual alms*, as both writings and chronicles do witness." Wiclif then proceeds to fortify his positions by passages from St. Bernard's "Considerations," addressed to Pope Eugenius III. ; in which the right of the Vicar of St. Peter to secular dominion is denied, and the desire of it condemned as the most dangerous of poisons. If this paper⁴ be rightly ascribed to Wiclif, it matters but little whether or not it were drawn up in obedience to the requisition of Parliament. It is valuable, at least, as indicating the tenor of his own thoughts, upon a question of great national and ecclesiastical importance. The reader will, doubtless, have remarked the language in which he speaks of the temporal possessions of the clergy. He represents them as a *perpetual alms* ; that is, not as a contribution to be solicited by the clergy, day by day, or year by year, from the members of their flock ; but rather as an endowment originating purely in voluntary benevolence and piety, to be equitably and faithfully continued to them upon the same kindly principle. According to his views, the priesthood may be considered as holding their property under a tenure,

⁴ It is printed in Fox, p. 510, ed. 1684.

liable to forfeiture by such gross abandonment of their duties, as must defeat the purposes for which the Christian ministry was instituted. On this subject, however, more will be said hereafter.

CHAPTER V.

1377—1379.

Bulls issued by the Pope against Wiclif—Coldly received at Oxford—Wiclif appears at Lambeth before the Papal delegates—Violence of the Londoners—Message from the Queen Dowager—Wiclif's written answers to the charges—He is dismissed with injunctions to abstain from spreading his doctrines—His conduct on this occasion considered—His reply to the mixtim theologus—His views with regard to Church property—In what sense he considered the possessions of the Church as Alms—His dangerous sickness—He is visited by several of the Mendicants, who exhort him to repentance—His answer.

THE pastoral duties of Lutterworth, and the theological labours of Oxford, probably divided the time of Wiclif, in the interval between the month of February, 1377, when the tempest which threatened him was so suddenly dispersed, and the close of the same year, when it once more gathered over his head. It does not appear that any record has been preserved of the erroneous articles of doctrine for which he had been summoned to answer before the convocation at St. Paul's. Agents, however, were busily at work, by whose fidelity and diligence the Apostolic see was, soon after, provided with materials of accusation; and, accordingly, in the course of some months from the tumultuous proceedings related in the preceding chapter, no less than four bulls issued forth, for the suppression and punishment of the innovator. In these instru-

1377.
Bulls issued by
the Pope against
Wiclif.

ments, three of which are addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Bishop of London, the servant of the servants of God, “laments that England, illustrious for its wealth and grandeur, but still more illustrious for the purity of its faith, should now be overrun with the tares of a pernicious heresy ; and (to complete the affliction and the shame) that the evil had been felt at Rome, before it had ever been resisted in Britain ! His Holiness had been credibly informed that John Wiclif, Rector of the church of Lutterworth, and Professor of the Sacred Page—(it were well if he were not a master of errors!) —had broken forth into a detestable insanity, and had dared to assert and spread abroad opinions utterly subversive of the Church, and savouring of the perversity and ignorance of Marsilius of Padua, and John of Ganduno¹, both of accursed memory.” For this cause it was strictly enjoined that enquiry should *secretly* be made respecting this matter ; and, if it should turn out to be as represented, then the said John Wiclif should forthwith be apprehended and

¹. No capitalists, in the most commercial age, ever contended more inflexibly for the rights of property, than the more rigorous Franciscans of the fourteenth century contended for the renunciation of all property whatever. Their desperate fidelity to the primitive institute of their founder, involved them in a series of conflicts with the chair of St. Peter. Among their principal champions were *Marsilius of Padua*, and *John de Ganduno* ; who, under the protection of the Emperor, Lewis of Bavaria, about the year 1327, published virulent invectives against the existing Pope, John XXII. ; and assailed, without measure or scruple, the papal usurpations in general. See *Mosheim*, cent. xiv. part ii. vol. iii. pp. 335—354.

imprisoned, that his confession should be taken, *kept strictly concealed*, and transmitted under seal to Rome, and the offender himself detained, *until further directions should be received*. It was also enjoined, that due vigilance should be exercised to preserve the king, and the royal family, together with his nobles and councillors, from the defilement of these pestilent perversions. A paternal epistle is, further, addressed to his Majesty Edward III., requesting that he would extend his gracious support to the proceedings of the prelates, as he valued his good name on earth, his bliss in heaven, and the benediction of the Holy See. A mandate similar to the three former, was, also, addressed to the University of Oxford, strictly commanding them, on pain of forfeiting all the privileges conferred on them by the Holy See, to suppress the doctrines and conclusions imputed to Wiclif, to seize the person of Wiclif himself, and to deliver it to the custody of the archbishop and his colleague. With these documents was inclosed a schedule, containing nineteen erroneous conclusions, said to be maintained and taught by the heresiarch².

The bulls³ were dated on the 22nd of May (xi. *Cal. Junii*), 1377; but they do not appear to have reached England till the following November. At this time, Edward III. had been some months dead,

² Lewis, p. 316. *Papers and Records*, No. 18. The schedule concludes thus: “Iste fuerunt propositiones, vel potius deliramenta, predicti Johannis, quæ ad aures Domini Apostolici pervenire.”

³ These instruments are printed in Lewis, p. 305—314. *Pap. and Rec.* No. 12—16.

having expired on the 21st of June preceding. Nevertheless, the prelates to whom these instruments were addressed, proceeded to the execution of them ; declaring that neither entreaties, nor menaces, nor gifts, nor the terrors of death itself, should divert them from their duty in this righteous cause⁴. At Oxford, however, the Papal mandate met with a very different reception. It was even debated whether the bull should not be disdainfully rejected⁵. Upon this, a peremptory letter was addressed by Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, to the Chancellor of Oxford, insisting upon a speedy and faithful obedience. The result of all these preliminary proceedings was, that,

1378. early in the next year, Wiclid appeared
Wiclid appears at before the synod of Papal commissioners,
Lambeth before the Papal dele- assembled in the archbishop's chapel,
gates. at Lambeth palace. But here again, disappointment was at hand. At the time of the meeting, the place was besieged by multitudes of the

⁴ *Episcopi . . . animati plurimum, profitebantur se nullius minis vel muneribus esse flectendos, quin, in istâ rectâ causâ, justitiam sequerentur, etiam si periculum capitis immineret.* Walsingham, p. 205.

⁵ *To the utter amazement and dismay of Walsingham !*
“ *Diu in pendulo hærebant, utrum papalem bullam deberent cum honore recipere, vel omnino cum dedecore refutare. Oxoniense Studium Generale ! quam gravi lapsu a sapientiæ et scientiæ culmine decidisti ! Quod, quondam, inextricabilia et dubia toti mundo declarare consuësti ; jam, ignorantie nubilo obfuscatum, dubitare non vereris, quæ quemlibet e laicis Christianis dubitare non licet. Pudet recordationis tante imprudentiæ ; et, ideo, supersedeo in hujusmodi materiâ immorari ; ne materna videar ubera decerpere manibus, quæ dare lac potum scientiæ consuevère !* ” Walsingham, p. 200, ed. 1574, ad an. 1377.

Londoners, who are represented by the chronicles of the time, as deeply infected by the heresy of Wiclif. The more violent among them broke ^{Violence of the} into the chapel⁶ where the delegates ^{Londoners.} were convened, and showed by their words and demeanour, that they were prepared to resent the infliction of injury on the person of the reformer : and the consternation of the delegates was aggravated by the sudden appearance of Sir Lewis Clifford in the court, with a message from the Queen Mother, ^{Message from the} the widow of the Black Prince, ^{Queen Dowager.} positively forbidding them to proceed to any definitive sentence against Wiclif. The effect of this mandate is indignantly described by Walsingham : “ As at the wind of a shaken reed, their speech became softer than oil ; to the public loss of their own dignity, and the damage of the whole Church. They who had sworn that they would yield no obedience even to the princes and nobles of the realm, until they had chastised the excesses of the heresiarch, conformably to the Papal mandate, were smitten with such terror by the face of an obscure retainer of the princess, that you would have thought their horns were gone⁷, and that they had become as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.” The whole scene furnishes a curious indication of the turbulent spirit of those times : and the irruption of the mob on the one hand, and the imperious message of the royal

⁶ Wals. p. 206, ed. 1574.

⁷ Such are the words of the chronicler : “—ut cornibus eos carere putares ; factos velut homo non audiens, et non habens in ore suo redargutiones.” Wals. Hist. Angl. p. 205, 206, ed. 1574.

dowager on the other, show that the influence of Wiclif must have been widely diffused through all ranks of society, from the highest to the lowest.

At this meeting, Wiclif delivered to Wiclif's written answer to the charges. He is dismissed with an admonition not to spread his doctrines.

the Commissioners a paper⁸, containing an answer to the charges of heresy, and an explanation of the opinions expressed in his conclusions. The delegates,

being probably overawed by the message from the Court, signified their dissatisfaction merely by an admonition to Wiclif to abstain from repeating such propositions, either in the schools or in his sermons : an injunction which he has been accused of treating with contempt⁹. Besides this paper, he presented to the Parliament, which assembled in April, 1378, another document¹⁰ of a similar import, though with some variations, and, in several parts, much more diffuse and explicit than the former. His reason for this step (if we may judge from the very obscure title prefixed to this paper) was, that he was anxious to *protest*, in the most public manner, against the misrepresentation of his opinions, as reported at Rome¹.

⁸ It is printed (by the title of "Conclusiones sue, cum responsione suâ) in Lewis, p. 59—67. Also in Walsingham, p. 206—209.

⁹ Wals. p. 206.

¹⁰ Its title in the Selden MS. is, "ad Parliamentum Regis." See Vaugh. vol. ii. p. 384.

¹ "Protestatio Reverendi Doctoris, una cum ejus Conclusionibus, quæ ab eo, in subscriptâ formâ, sunt posite; quæ, in consimilibus materiis, et dissimilibus formis, sunt et fuerunt reportatae, et ad Curiam Romanam transmissæ; et sic, in mul-

With reference to the first of these papers, Walsingham affirms that Wiclf, "by his artful explanatory statements, deluded his judges, and threw some plausible meaning into his nefarious propositions: all of which, if simply taken, according to the mode in which he had produced them in the schools, and in his public preaching, unquestionably savoured of heretical *pravity*²." In the same manner, a modern historian would have us believe that the tenor of these explanations was such as enabled the Prelates to receive them as orthodox³. If the Court was deluded, and the paper was, in fact, so understood, and so received, the orthodoxy of the judges themselves must have been far less wakeful than usual. The opinions expressed in both the explanatory papers will be found, on examination, to be pretty strongly tainted with *heretical pravity*. Among other things, they assert not only the peccability of the Pope, but the power of the Christian community to correct his moral aberrations:—propositions, these, of no easy digestion to orthodox divines of the fourteenth century. If the judges of Wiclf were able to receive these sayings, it may reasonably be suspected that their capacities were quickened by the cries of the London mob, and

tis, minus bene imposita." This paper is printed in Lewis, p. 382, No. 40, from MSS. Selden. Archi. B. 10.

² I presume, but am not quite certain, that this must be the meaning of his words. The reader shall judge. After reciting his *first* explanatory paper, (the *second* he does not give,) the chronicler adds, "Hoc eodem modo, idem versipellis ille Wicklefides, *ponendo intellectum in suis nefandis propositionibus favore et diligentia Londinensium, delusit suos examinatores, Episcopos derisit, et evasit.*" Wals. p. 209.

³ Lingard, vol. iv. p. 256, &c.

by the imperious message from the mother of the king. Besides, if the explanations were, indeed, found orthodox and satisfactory, it is strange that the delegates should have enjoined silence, fearing “lest the laity should be made to stumble at such *perversions*⁴.”

Both in the paper presented to the delegates, and in that afterwards submitted to Parliament, Wiclif protests that he is willing to defend his opinions unto death⁵; and, at the end of the latter document, he distinctly declares that his object is a reformation of the Church⁶. But there is yet a third paper to be noticed; namely, that which was published by him, somewhere about this period, in answer to a violent assault upon his positions, by an anonymous antagonist, whom he calls a “motley theologue⁷. ” At what precise time this reply was put forth, we are not informed. But, the language of it seems plainly to indicate that, when it was written, the first paper must have been transmitted to Rome; and that the delegates must then have been waiting for a final decision. For, speaking of the unlimited power of binding and loosing, as claimed by the Pope, the author says,—“Whether the judges, or delegates, *by the Pope's permission*, proceed to condemn my conclusions, or the Lord Pope himself, the faithful are, unanimously, to make opposition to that blasphemous opinion⁸. ” If these words are combined with the

⁴ Wals. p. 206.

⁵ Wals. p. 206. Lewis, p. 60.

⁶ The concluding words of the second paper are, “sunt conclusiones, quas vult usque ad mortem deferre per hoc, valeat mores Ecclesiae reformatum.” Lewis.

⁷ Mixtim Theologus.

language of the bull, (which enjoins that the whole proceedings of the delegates should be forwarded under seal to Rome, *to await the further direction of his Holiness*⁹,) little doubt can remain that the case had been disposed of in England, so far as the commissioners had, then, authority to dispose of it; and that they were actually expecting further instructions from the Pope, either in the shape of a final sentence from himself, or of a general permission to them, to deal with the matter as they should think fit. It will be found, however, that the terrors of the forthcoming sentence had no effect in arresting or mitigating his hostilities. At the very time when his fate was pending at Rome; when every syllable that fell from his pen, or even from his lips, would be faithfully and speedily reported at the Vatican; his language became, more than ever, uncompromising and vehement¹. His adversary had affirmed that, from the

⁹ “Donec a nobis super hoc aliud receperitis in mandatis.” See this passage of the bull in Lewis, p. 311.

¹ It is affirmed in Lingard’s History of England, vol. iv. p. 256, 257, that, to *prepare* for the day of trial, Wiclf *first* published a defence, in the boldest and most inflammatory language; but that, afterwards, he assumed a moderate tone; and, at his trial, exhibited the same paper to the prelates, with numerous corrections and improvements. There must, surely, be some mistake here. If any one of the three papers deserves the character of *inflammatory*, it is the reply to the “Motley Divine:” and no evidence has been produced to show that this was published previously to the first paper. On the contrary, the internal evidence renders it next to certain that it did not appear till after his examination had been reported to the Pope.

The historian is, further, mistaken in stating that all the

moment when any one becomes Pope, he likewise becomes incapable of mortal sin: an assertion, says the Reformer, the consequence of which is, that whatever he ordains must be just and rightful. He might expunge any book from the Canon of Scripture; or might add any book to it; or alter the whole Bible at his pleasure, and turn all the Scriptures into heresy; and establish, as Catholic, a Scripture which is repugnant to the truth. It was his own opposition to such opinions, he observes, that had called forth the displeasure of the Pope, and had armed the hierarchy against him. He then alludes to his various conclusions: and he tells us, that the mark of heresy was most deeply branded upon those positions, which maintain that the temporalities of the Church were liable to forfeiture, in cases of habitual abuse; and, that the Pontiff himself may lawfully be accused and corrected by his subjects. He then proceeds to vindicate those articles which relate to the power of absolution; and to denounce the assertion that the Pope, or the clergy, can bind or loose, as effectually as God himself. Whoever he may be who makes this assertion, he should not be allowed by Christians to live on earth, much less to be their leader and captain. He then goes on to exhort the soldiers of Christ, both secular and clerical, to stand for the law of God, *even unto blood*. If an angel from heaven were to promulgate such opinions, the faithful must resist him, for the pre-

three papers are to be found in Walsingham. In fact, only the first of the three is to be found there; namely, the paper presented by Wiclid on his trial.

servation of the faith. If, whenever the Pope pretends to bind, with the pains of eternal damnation, all who oppose him in the acquisition of temporal things, those persons are actually so bound ; what can be easier for him than to seize on all the kingdoms of the earth, and subvert every ordinance of Christ ? What follows, but that your wives, your daughters, and all your worldly substance, are at the mercy of the Pontiff and his priesthood ; yea, that the whole order of the world may be overthrown ? And is impiety like this to be endured by Christian men² ?

To revert, however, to the paper first presented to the judges.—It would, after all, very ill become a candid biographer of Wiclid to claim any thing like unqualified commendation for that document. It would be vain to deny that there is, in several parts of it, an air of obliquity, of confusion, of bewildering scholastic intricacy, which very greatly weakens its dignity and effect. Besides, the whole is expressed in a barbarous and obscure jargon, which, occasionally, sets interpretation almost at defiance. Whether all this is to be, in part, ascribed to the perils of his situation, or whether it may be justly attributed to the unhappy effect produced on his understanding by the discipline of the schools,—none, perhaps, can pronounce, but He who searches the heart. Neither is it reasonable that our admiration for the energy of the man, should betray us into an indiscriminate approbation of all the opinions conveyed in these, and various other of his writings.

² See Lewis, p. 78. 80.

For instance ;—Wiclif, beyond all doubt, both on this, and on many other occasions, ex-
^{Wiclif's views} with regard to Church property. pressed himself in language which may seem almost to justify the charge, that, by his system, all ecclesiastical possessions were marked out for spoliation³. It must be allowed that he taught a lesson to princes, and to nobles, and to commoners, which they were all abundantly willing to learn ; and, most zealously, in a future age, did they “ better the instruction ! ” At the same time, it may reasonably be doubted whether a somewhat more sweeping principle of forfeiture and confiscation has not often been ascribed to him, than the general tenor of his writings will fairly warrant. The hierarchy of those days seemed to think and to act, as if the earth was theirs—as if the work of clerical appropriation was neither more nor less than a redemption of worldly wealth and substance from unhallowed uses—and that to touch their possessions, however fraudulently acquired, or however scandalously abused, was to be guilty of a desecration, which no enormity of Churchmen could justify in the sight of God or man. Wiclif, on the other hand, laboured to recall the attention of the world to the original of all these sacred endowments : to show, that they were derived from the voluntary and pious liberality of laymen, under the implied condition that they were to be used for the temporal and eternal benefit of the human race. This, however, he unfortunately did by the reiterated application of a

³ Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 358, 4th edit.

In what sense very dangerous monosyllable. *Alms* Wiclid considered the possessions of was the designation which he gave to the Church as *alms*. clerical emolument of almost every description: and this little word, it must be confessed, was admirably fitted to make popular and current the convenient notion, that religious ministers are to be solely dependent on the feelings and the caprices of their congregations. He sometimes, indeed, speaks of the possessions of the Church as *alms in perpetuity*; —as *alms*, because they had their origin in voluntary bounty; as held *in perpetuity*, because they were granted by the donors without any limitation of time. Nevertheless, two things seem quite indisputable; first, that, in his judgment, it would have been much better for the Church, if her ministers had never been invested with secular possessions at all; and, secondly, that, in cases of flagrant abuse or neglect, the revocation of such grants fell, not only within the competency of the temporal authorities, but within the line of their positive duty. Such cases, he conceived, were perpetually occurring, under the system of ecclesiastical polity which it was the business of his whole life to denounce, and, if possible, to reform: and it cannot be denied, that the tone in which he called for the correction of that system was, often, as inflammatory as his principles themselves were questionable and hazardous.

It may be convenient to introduce, in this place, a circumstance, which is said to have occurred in the course of the following year, highly characteristic of Wiclid's inflexible energy. Worn out by the toil of incessant composition, and by the anxieties occasioned

1379.
Wiclit's danger-
ous sickness. by his recent prosecution, he was seized with an alarming sickness, while at Oxford, in the beginning of 1379. His old adversaries, the Mendicants, were in hopes that, with him, the season of suffering and danger would, likewise, be the season of weakness ; and that they might thus have an opportunity of extorting from him some healing acknowledgment of his manifold sins

Is visited by se-
veral of the Men-
dicants, who ex-
hort him to re-
pentance. against their Order. With this view, they resolved to send a deputation of their body to his sick bed ; and, in order

to heighten the solemnity of the proceeding, they took care to be attended by the civil authorities. Four of their own doctors, or regents, together with as many senators of the city, or aldermen of the wards, accordingly entered his chamber ; and finding him stretched upon his bed, they opened their commission by wishing him a happy recovery from his distemper. They soon entered, however, on the more immediate object of their embassy. They reminded him of the grievous wrongs he had heaped upon their fraternity, both by his sermons and his writings ; they admonished him that, to all appearance, his last hour was approaching ; and they expressed their hope that he would seize the opportunity, thus afforded him, of making them the only reparation in his power, and penitently revoking, in their presence, whatever he might have uttered or published to their disparagement. This exhortation was heard by him in silence : but when it was concluded, he ordered his servants to raise him on his pillows ; and then, fixing his eyes upon the com-

pany, he said, with a firm voice, “I shall not die, but live, and again declare the evil deeds of the Friars.” The Doctors immediately retired in confusion; and Wiclit was, happily, raised up again, and spared for several years longer, during which time he amply redeemed his pledge of renewed hostility to the Mendicants⁴.

⁴ Bale, p. 469; referred to by Lewis, p. 82.



CHAPTER VI.

1379—1381.

Origin of the Papal Schism—Wyclif's "Schisma Papar"—His Treatise on the truth and meaning of Scripture—His Postils—Wyclif as a Parish Priest—Picture of the Clergy of that age from his tract, "How the Office of Curate is ordained of God"—Wyclif's translation of the Scriptures—Elucidarium Bibliorum, or Prologue, &c., not the work of Wyclif—No complete version before Wyclif's—Question of appeal to private judgment—Wyclif's defence of the translation of the Scriptures—His version proscribed by the Church, but, nevertheless, widely circulated—Insurrection of the Peasantry—Causes assigned for it by Papal writers—its real cause, probably, the wretchedness and degradation of the peasantry—Possibly aggravated by the growing impatience of Ecclesiastical power—Injustice of ascribing it to the religious opinions of Wyclif and his followers.

Origin of the Papal schism. It is well known that, very early in the fourteenth century, the Papal residence was removed from Rome to Avignon. The first prelate that submitted to this migration was Clement the Fifth, a native of France; who, being indebted for his elevation to the influence of Philip the Fair, complied with the urgent wish of that monarch, that the head of that Church should be constantly within his own dominions. This desertion of the ancient seat of spiritual empire was contemptuously styled by the Italians the Baby-

lonish captivity : and, in truth, no form of sarcastic speech could well be too strong to describe the disaster and disgrace which this transfer inflicted on the Apostolic See. The absence of the vicegerent of Christ was a signal for all the winds of faction to break loose, and to fight against the honour of the Church, and the peace of Italy. During this calamitous period, the patrimony of St. Peter was ravaged, and the authority of his successor frequently treated with contempt. The thunders which shook the world when they issued from the seven hills, sent forth *an uncertain sound*, comparatively faint and powerless, when launched from a region of less elevated sanctity. The mighty voice which formerly made earthly potentates tremble, now seemed almost to *whisper out of the dust* ; so that the terrors of the Inquisition itself were, sometimes, scarcely sufficient to keep alive the belief, that Christ had any longer a delegate or an oracle upon earth.

The termination of this *captivity* was, if possible, still more calamitous to the Papacy, than its commencement and its continuance. On the death of Gregory XI. in 1378, the people of Rome, disgusted and enraged by the spectacle of a long succession of Frenchmen in the Papal chair, terrified the conclave (a majority of which were, likewise, Frenchmen), into the election of an Italian prelate, Bartholomèo de Pregnano, who, together with the tiara, assumed the name of Urban VI. His insolence and rapacity soon drove the cardinals from Rome to the territory of Naples, where they collected courage to declare their former choice a nullity, and to substitute for Urban, Robert, Count of Geneva, since known by

the name of Clement VII. Which of these two was lawfully entitled to the Pontifical throne, is, to this hour, a subject of debate. Each party, however, seemed to be confident of his own right ; and the Italian, accordingly, remained at Rome, while the Frenchman adopted the example of his eight predecessors, and fixed his residence at Avignon. The cause of Clement was maintained by France, Spain, Scotland, Sicily, and Cyprus. The rest of Europe acknowledged Urban to be the true vicar of Christ. And thus, to use the subsequent language of Wiclf, “the head of Anti-Christ was cloven in twain, and the two parts were made to fight against each other.”

Historians present us with a frightful picture of the miseries inflicted on Christendom by this *great schism of the West*. In the first place, there was the spectacle of two competitors for the spiritual vicegerency assailing each other with vindictive fulminations. Then followed the utter dissolution of morals among the ministers of Christ, who assumed the aspect rather of conflicting powers of evil, than messengers of peace. Lastly came the distraction and desolation of heart, inflicted on sorrowing multitudes, who knew not where to look for the representative of their Saviour on earth, and who thus fancied themselves cut off from that communion with the Head of the Church, from which alone they would derive any hope of salvation. Society appeared, for a long period, in imminent danger of being utterly cast loose from the anchorage either of faith, or hope, or charity. But, the march of God’s Omnipotence was in the midst of this

confusion. The Papal power was then smitten with a desperate wound ; and though she at length appeared to "close and be herself," her full strength never returned unto her ; and half the Christian world was enabled, after many a convulsive struggle, to break away from her deadly embrace.

By the death of Gregory XI., the elements of destruction, which had been gathering over the head of Wiclif, were, for a time, dispersed. The fury of the rival Pontiffs was wasted upon the adherents of each other ; and, in the midst of the strife, the delinquencies of the English heretic seem to have been well nigh forgotten. To him, however, the peril, which had just passed away, brought no thoughts of relaxation. On the contrary, the Papal schism, to which he probably owed his safety, became instantly the object of his assault. At the very outset of the conflict, Wiclif was soon ready with a treatise on the subject, *Wiclif's Schisma* in which he invites the sovereigns of *Papaæ*. Christendom to seize the occasion, which Providence had sent them, of shaking to pieces the whole fabric of the Romish dominion. " Trust we in the help of Christ," he exclaims, " for he hath begun already to help us graciously, *in that he hath cloven the head of Anti-Christ, and made the two parts fight against each other* ; for it cannot be doubtful that the sin of the Popes, which hath so long continued, hath brought in the division." The time, he said, was now come for "Emperors and kings to help, in this cause, to maintain God's law, to recover the heritage of the Church, and to destroy the foul sins of clerks, saving their persons. Thus should peace be established,

and simony destroyed." The suffrages of cardinals or of princes, could never, he adds, confer on man an immunity from error; "the children of the fiend should, therefore, learn their logic and their philosophy well, lest they prove heretical by a false understanding of the law of Christ: and, of all heresies, none could be greater than the belief that a man may be absolved from sin, if he give money, or because a priest layeth his hand on the head, and saith *I absolve thee*. Thou must be sorrowful in thy heart, or God absolveth thee not." He then goes on positively to deny the necessity of confessing to a priest; and, lastly, he calls on the secular powers to gird them up to the great work of ecclesiastical reformation¹.

Among the voluminous remains of Wiclit's Postills. Wiclit, ample specimens are to be found of his instructions from the pulpit, delivered, probably, between the year 1376, when he was presented to the rectory of Lutterworth, and his death, which happened in 1384. It should here be observed, that the preachers of those times had two methods of addressing their congregations from the pulpit. They either announced some particular subject, on which it was their intention to enlarge; and, in that case, their discourse assumed something of the form of an oration, or declamatory essay: and this, in the technical language of the times, was known by the name of *declaring*. Or else they read to their audience a certain portion of Scripture, which they proceeded to

¹ "Schisma Papæ." There is a copy of this Tract in Trin. Coll. Dublin. Class C. tab. 3, No. 12. See Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 4.

illustrate by exposition, and to render practically useful in the way of application. This latter method was designated by the barbarous term of "*postilling*" ;" that is, explaining by a sort of running commentary. Another practice, of much less ancient example, was that of choosing one or more verses of Scripture, and raising upon them a superstructure of exhortation or disquisition. In those days of metaphysical dissection, the preacher was frequently tempted, by this practice, into a labyrinth of divisions and subdivisions : and, in later times, the same method has, virtually, brought back the ancient practice of *declaring* ; for, with us, the text is often little more than a scriptural motto, which serves to announce the subject of the oration or discourse. It is probable that the expository method has been gradually abandoned, from the extreme difficulty of conducting it with sufficient force and animation ; the statement of their own thoughts being, to many, an easier task, than that of illustrating facts and characters, or developing the precepts and the meditations of other teachers. This method, however, of *postillation*, or exposition, was the form selected by Wiclid for his parochial instructions. Some three hundred of his manuscript homilies are still preserved in the British Museum, and the libraries of Cambridge and Dublin, and in other collections. Of these many consist of little more than brief notes, thrown together, apparently, for the sole purpose of recalling to his memory the points on which it was his intention to

² *Postilla* is a word of degenerate Latinity, signifying a marginal gloss, or commentary.

enlarge. Others, again, are more completely wrought out, and sometimes approach to the form and length of a modern sermon. We are told by one³, who reports the result of his own examination of these remains, that “there is scarcely a peculiarity of opinion adopted by Wiclif, the nature or the progress of which might not be illustrated from these voluminous remains.” They are uniformly adapted to the purposes of popular instruction; and the Reformer evidently considered it as no departure from that office, to assail the abuses of the hierarchy, and to denounce them to his people as the grand impediment to their moral and spiritual progress. Throughout, the holy Scriptures are represented as the supreme authority from which we are to seek the knowledge of our duty, and the grounds of our social and moral obligations; the great truths of the Gospel are plainly and faithfully set forth; the frailty and depravity of man are urgently insisted on; the sufferings and merits of the Saviour are represented as the only ground on which the sinner can rest his hope of pardon and acceptance; and the influence of the Eternal Spirit, as the only fire which can baptize the hearts of men unto holiness and purity.

One or two extracts from the sermons of Wiclif are here introduced⁴; as some curiosity may naturally

³ Mr. Vaughan, whose account of Wiclif’s homilies may be found in his second volume, p. 12—36.

⁴ For these the public is partly indebted to Mr. Vaughan, and partly to the compilers above mentioned, in whose recent publication may be found copious specimens of Wiclif’s Postills, p. 186—336. Some few passages, indeed, had previously

be felt respecting the addresses of so eminent a preacher, to a parochial congregation in the fourteenth century. One of the first things that strikes us in these discourses is, the headlong confidence with which they apply to the Papacy the character of Anti-Christ. “The laws and judgments,” says the preacher, “which Anti-Christ brought in, and added to the law of God, mar too much the Church of Christ. For with the stewards of the Church, the laws of Anti-Christ are the rules by which they make officers therein ; and, to deceive the laity, Anti-Christ challengeth to be, in such things, fully God’s fellow. For he affirms that, if he judgeth thus, his will should be taken for reason ; whereas, this is the highest point that falleth to the Godhead. Popes and kings, therefore, should seek a reason above their own will : for such blasphemy often bringeth to men more than the pride of Lucifer. He said he would ascend, and be like the Most High ; but he challenged not to be the fellow of God,—even with him or passing him. May God bring down this pride, and help, that his word may reverse that of the fiend ! *Well, indeed, I know, that when it is at the highest, this smoke shall disappear.*” Again : “It is known that Anti-Christ hath enthralled the Church more than it was under the old law, though then the service was not to be borne. New laws are now made by Anti-Christ, and such as are not founded on the laws of the Saviour. More ceremonies are now brought in, and more do they tarry men in coming to heaven,

been given by Mr. Turner, in his History of England, vol. ii. p. 426, 427.

than did the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees. One cord of this thraldom is the lordship claimed by Anti-Christ, as being full lord, both of spirituals and temporals. Thus he turneth Christian men aside from serving Christ in Christian freedom. But, Anti-Christ hath no power to impede the freedom which Christ hath bought. Christ gave this freedom to men, that they might come to the bliss of heaven with less difficulty ; but Anti-Christ burdens them that they may give him money. Foul, therefore, is this doing, both to God and his law ⁵."

The good people of Lutterworth must almost have looked to see the roof of their church falling upon their heads, when it first echoed to sounds of such audacity. Equally strange, though not perhaps so fearfully astounding, were his instructions on the mode of their acceptance with God. Having solemnly dwelt on the supreme majesty of Jehovah, and shown that his justice must be violated by forgiving sin without an atonement, ("else must He give free licence to sin, both in angels and men, and then sin were no sin, and our God were no God,") he proceeds to consider what that atonement must be. His people probably might, at first, have expected to hear of the good offices of the saints, or of the maternal influence and authority of the Holy Virgin, who alone could secure the effective intercession of her Son, in behalf of transgression against the laws of the Father. Not a syllable of all this ! He refers, directly and *solely*, to the only Name whereby men can be

⁵ Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 26—28.

saved ; and this in language which might entirely become an English pulpit at the present day. "The person," he says, "who may make atonement for the sin of our first father, must needs be God and man. For, as mankind trespassed, so must mankind make satisfaction : and, therefore, it could not be that an angel should make satisfaction for man ; for neither has he the might, nor was his the person (or nature) that here sinned. But, since all men are one person, if any member of this person make satisfaction, the whole person maketh it. And by this we may see that, if God made a man of nought, or anew, to be of the kind of Adam, yet he was holden to God, as much as he might, for himself ; and so he might not make satisfaction for himself, and also for Adam's sin. Since then, satisfaction must be made for the sin of Adam, as it has been said, such a person must make this satisfaction, as was both God and man ; for, the worthiness of such a person's deeds would be even with the unworthiness of the sin⁶." The whole tenor of his ministrations points to the agonies of this Divine and Incarnate Saviour as the only object on which the thoughts of men are to be fixed, when they are seeking forgiveness and salvation : and the practical inference is, that "we follow after Christ in his blessed passion,—that we keep ourselves from sin hereafter, and gather a devout mind from him⁷." In speaking of the deservings of man, and the grace of God, he teaches us to look up to God as the only source

⁶ On the Nativity of Christ. Postils, p. 187, *ubi supra*.

⁷ Similar statements may be found in his Sermon on the Priesthood of Christ. Postils, p. 204, &c.

of whatever may be good or acceptable within us. "We should know," he says, "that faith is a gift of God; and so God gives it not to man, unless he gives it *graciously*. Thus, indeed, all good things which men have, is of God: and accordingly, *when God rewardeth a good work in man, he crowneth his own gift*. All this is of grace; even as all things are of grace, that men have, of the will of God. God's goodness is the first cause which giveth men these good things: and so, it may not be that God doeth good to men, but if [except] he do it freely, by his own grace: and, with this, we shall grant that men deserve of God."

These specimens may serve to show the spirit in which the Reformer discharged the office of a preacher. That his labours, in this line of duty, were abundant, may be concluded from the fact, that so many as 300 of his familiar Sermons, or Postils, still remain, notwithstanding his writings were marked out for destruction after his death; and that many of them actually perished, under the vigilance and activity with which the proscription was carried on. His example was followed up with indefatigable, though very irregular and disorderly, activity by his adherents: and a power was thus put forth, somewhat analogous to that which had been called into action by Pope Innocent III. It is notorious, that the Mendicant Orders, at their first institution, were the most popular and effective preachers of their day. The Franciscans, more especially, were to be found in every village; and by the unwearied assiduity of their ministrations, they, and the Dominicans, at one

time, nearly monopolized the veneration and obedience of the populace throughout the Christian world. One great secret of their power was the practice of addressing the people in a familiar style, and in the language of their country. The genuine words of eternal life, indeed, were seldom on their lips. Lying miracles—legendary histories—puerile and monstrous fables—“chronicles of the world—and stories of the battle of Troy”—these were the themes, which, in those ages, beguiled the souls of men, and nearly banished the sound of the Gospel from the earth. The degeneracy of these fraternities has already been noticed. But, although Wiclid detested their abuses, he seems to have been keenly alive to the efficacy of their system: and it cannot be denied that he was led, at length, to a very dangerous imitation of it. For, both before and after his death, “Wiclid’s Poor Priests” were in perpetual itinerancy almost throughout the kingdom; though destitute of all licence or authority, save that which was conferred by the name of their Master.

One would willingly believe that, even in those days, many an instance of ministerial faithfulness, similar to that of Wiclid himself, might still be found in the retired hamlets and villages of our country. But, if his report may be trusted, such examples must have been rare indeed! According to his representation of his brethren⁸, they were in general not merely neglectful of their duty; they were the pests of society, “angels of Satan to lead men

⁸ In his tract, “How the office of Curates is ordained of God.”

to hell." They were many of them,—if we are to credit their accuser,—infamous for ostentation, sensuality, and avarice. Their doctrine was no better than their example. "They taught sinful men to buy hell full dear.—They shut against their people the kingdom of heaven, and would neither go in themselves, nor suffer other men to enter." They were the flatterers and the parasites of the great, whose vices they encouraged by their own base and servile imitation. They were buried in all the surfeitings of a worldly life, "haunted taverns out of measure, and stirred up laymen to excess, idleness, profane swearing, and disgraceful brawls." They wasted their time and wealth in gambling and revelry, went about the streets roaring and outrageous, and "sometimes had neither eye, nor tongue, nor hand, nor foot to help themselves, for drunkenness." They even gloried in that which was their shame, and were ambitious of winning, by these enormities, a reputation for "nobleness, courtesy, goodness, freeness, and worthiness." In the midst of this worse than pagan desecration of themselves, they maintained their influence and authority by an impious prostitution of the power of the keys, and extorted, by the terror of spiritual censures, the money and the obedience of their congregations⁹. In some instances, they entered

⁹ As Chaucer's plowman says—

Christ's people they proudly curse
With broad book, and braying bell,
To put pennies in their purse,
They will sell both heaven and hell.
If thou the truth of them will tell,
In great cursing shalt thou fall.

into a degrading partnership with the objects of their secret jealousy and hate, the itinerant friars and pardoners¹. “For, when there cometh a pardoner to rich places, with stolen bulls, and false relics, granting more years of pardon than come before doomsday, for gaining worldly wealth, he shall be received of curates, to have a part of that which he getteth.” With all these abominations upon their heads, they “magnified themselves above Christ, both God and

¹ The practices of these pardoners are thus described by Chaucer :—

His wallet before him on his lap,
 Brimful of pardons come from Rome all hot :—
 In his mail he had a pillowbeer,
 Which, as he said, was our lady's veil ;
 He said he had a gobbet of the sail
 That St. Peter had, when that he went
 Upon the sea, till Jesus Christ him hent *.
 He had a cross of lattern full of stones,
 And in a glass he had pig's bones.
 But with these relics, when he found
 A poor parson dwelling in upland,
 Upon a day he got him more money,
 Than that parson got in months tway,
 And thus, with feigned flattering and japes †,
 He made the parson and people his apes.
 But truly to tell at the last,
 He was in church a noble ecclesiast.
 Well could he read a lesson or a story,
 But always best he sung an offertory.
 Full well he wist when that song was sung
 He must preach and well afile his tongue,
 To win silver, as well as he could,
 Therefore he sung so merrily and loud.

* Caught.

† Tricks.

man ; for Christ bade his enemies, if he had spoken evil, to bear witness of the evil :" whereas these ministers of Anti-Christ defied all censures, defied all penal jurisdiction, and commanded the world to follow their teaching, whether it were true or false. "Ye curates," exclaims the Reformer, "see these heresies and blasphemies, and many more, which follow from your wicked life, and wayward teachings. Forsake them for dread of hell, and turn to good life, and true preaching of the Gospel, and ordinances of God, as Christ and his Apostles did, for reward of heavenly bliss ²."

It should be observed, that this tract cannot have been written until after the crusade, which was led by the Bishop of Norwich, in support of Urban VI., against his rival, Clement VII. ; as appears from the notice of that event, which occurs in the sixteenth section. It may, nevertheless, be properly introduced here, as exhibiting the accumulated result of Wiclid's observation, during the whole period of his public life. The picture, therefore, however exaggerated it may appear to us, is, at least, not executed by a rash and youthful hand, impelled by the first ardour of reforming zeal. It is one of the latest performances of his mature and reflecting age.

But we are now to consider, Wiclid's translation of the Scriptures. perhaps, the mightiest of all Wiclid's labours, his translation of the Bible into the English tongue. It is scarcely possible to convey a more just conception of the importance of this task,

² The tract in question is given, in a compressed form, in the extracts from Wiclid's writings above adverted to, p. 123 — 136.

than by producing the words in which it is mentioned by a Roman Catholic historian :—“ There was another weapon which the Rector of Lutterworth wielded with equal address, and still greater efficacy. In proof of his doctrines, he appealed to the Scriptures, and thus made his disciples judges between him and the bishops. Several versions of the sacred writings were even then extant; but they were confined to libraries, or only in the hands of persons who aspired to superior sanctity. Wiclif made a new translation, multiplied the copies with the aid of transcribers, and by his *poor priests* recommended it to the perusal of their hearers. *In their hands it became an engine of wonderful power.* Men were flattered with the appeal to their private judgment; the new doctrines insensibly acquired partisans and protectors in the higher classes, who alone were acquainted with the use of letters; a spirit of enquiry was generated; and the seeds were sown of that religious revolution which, in little more than a century, astonished and convulsed the nations of Europe³.”

These statements are nothing more than what might reasonably be expected from a conscientious Romanist; and they are cited, here, purely as a conclusive acknowledgment, that, whatever may be the merits of the great *religious revolution*, the labours of Wiclif, in translating the Bible, were powerfully instrumental in producing it. There is, however, one inaccuracy in this extract worthy of notice. It is asserted that “several versions of the sacred writings

³ Lingard, vol. iv. p. 266, 267.

Notice of previous versions of the parts of the Bible. were even then extant ;" in support of which assertion, the writer alleges the authority of Sir Thomas More⁴ : and the impression left by the statement is, that the English people were, at that time, in possession of some translation of every portion of the sacred volume. That this representation is not correct, seems to be fully established by the inquiries of Mr. Baber⁵ ; from which we learn, that no researches, hitherto made, have discovered any attempt towards a complete English Version of the books of the Old and New Testament previous to the undertaking of Wiclid. The only circumstance which can throw a shade of suspicion over his claim to the honour of this work, is the existence of a tract, by the title of *Elucidarium*

⁴ " The whole Bible was, long before Wiclid's days, by virtuous and well learned men, translated into the English tong, and by good and godly people, with devotion and soberness well and reverently red." Sir Thos. More's Dialogues, iii. 14, quoted in Ling. vol. iv. p. 27, note 64. Even according to this statement, the *appeal to private judgment* was not altogether a new thing. The version of the Scriptures into the vernacular language of any country, is itself a virtual appeal to private judgment ; unless accompanied with a prohibition of its perusal by the laity, or by a perpetual commentary which, *authoritatively*, fixes the sense in which it is to be understood.

⁵ See the " Historical Account of the Saxon and English Versions of the Scriptures previous to the opening of the fifteenth century," prefixed by Mr. Baber to his edition of Wiclid's translation of the New Testament ; in which will be found, perhaps, the most complete body of information hitherto collected, relative to this interesting subject.

Bibliorum; or, "Prologue to the complete Version of the Bible." There are two grounds on which this tract has been supposed to impeach the title of the Reformer to the distinction in question. The first is, that the Bodleian Library has a Manuscript of this Book, to which is annexed the date of MCCC....VIII. And if this date be correct, as it stands, of course there is an end of Wiclid's to the glory of First Translator. This objection, however, may be disposed of by a careful inspection of the MS.; from which it is clear, that the interval between the two Roman numerals (C and V) was originally occupied by another numeral, of which there has been a manifest erasure: and if, as is most probable, that numeral was a C, the date of the manuscript, instead of 1308, will be 1408, a period later than the death of Wiclid by four-and-twenty years. But, again, the Prologue above mentioned, has, by many writers, been ascribed to Wiclid himself. Now, unquestionably, the sentiments and opinions it contains, are in perfect harmony with those of the Proto-Reformer; and the title-page of the printed edition of 1550, accordingly, speaks of it expressly, as "written, about 200 years before, by John Wyckliffe⁶." If this were correct, the fact

Elucidarium Bibliorum; or Prologue, &c. not the work of Wiclid.

⁶ The title is as follows: "The true Copye of a Prologue wrytten about two C yeeres past by John Wyckliffe, (as may be justly gathered bi that, that John Bale hath written of him, in his boke, entitled the summarie of famouse writers of the Ile of Great Britan,) the original whereof is founde written in an Old English Bible, bitwixt the Olde Testament, and the Newe. Which Bible remaynith now in the Kyng

would, undoubtedly, be fatal to the notion, that his was the first complete Version of the Bible; for the author, in the course of his work, not only adverts to his own labours as a translator, but alludes to another translation already in existence. But, that Wiclf was not the author, is established by the internal evidence of the work itself. In the first place, it appeals, in the tenth chapter, to the authority of Gerson, (one of the most illustrious divines of that age,) by the name of Parisiensis⁷; and, as Gerson was not born till 1363, it is scarcely credible that he could have become an author of celebrity till after the death of Wiclf, which happened in 1384. Again, in the thirteenth chapter, the writer complains bitterly of the impediments to the prosecution of theology, occasioned by a regulation at Oxford, which prohibited the study of divinity till two years after commencing in arts, thus deferring it for nine or ten years from the time of entering the University. It is true that this regulation was as old as the year 1251; but it had long fallen into utter desuetude, and was not revived till 1387, three years after the decease of Wiclf. Lastly, the same thirteenth chapter (in which the author adverts to some unspeakable depravities, said to be notoriously prevalent among

his Majesties Chamber. Imprinted at London by Robert Crowley, dwellynge in Elie rents in Holburn. Anno Do. MDL."

⁷ John Charlier Gerson was styled Parisiensis, in consequence of his being chancellor and canon of some church in Paris. His piety and erudition, likewise, acquired for him the title of Evangelical, and Most Christian Doctor.

ecclesiastics) contains, towards the end of it, a manifest allusion to the articles, exhibited to the Parliament, in the eighteenth year of Richard II., with a view to the Reformation of the Church ; and this seems to fix the date of the composition, as subsequent to the year 1395, in which that Parliament was holden⁸.

It seems, therefore, beyond reasonable controversy, that Wiclid had no predecessor in his vast undertaking. It only remains to be observed, that some writers have gravely questioned whether Wiclid had any hand whatever in the great work which now bears his name. Of all "historic doubts," this, perhaps, is the most baseless. The language of Knighton alone is sufficient to overthrow it. "Christ," says the zealous Romanist, "committed the Gospel to the clergy and doctors of the Church, that they might minister it to the laity, and weaker persons, according to the exigency of times, and the wants of men. But this master John Wiclid translated it out of Latin into English, and, by that means, laid it more open to the laity, and to women, who could read, than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy, and those of them who had the best understanding : and so the Gospel pearl is cast abroad, and trodden under foot of swine ; and that which used to be precious to both clergy and laity, is made, as it were, the common jest of both ; and the jewel of the Church is turned into the sport of the people ; and what was before the *chief talent* of the clergy and doctors of

No complete Version before Wiclid's.

⁸ Baber, Hist. Acc.

the Church, is made for ever *common* to the laity⁹." To this testimony may be added the words of Wiclid himself, who, in one of his homilies¹, mentions the severity and persecution he had endured, because he had enabled the people to read the word of God in their own tongue ; and the fact, that in no list of his works that has yet appeared, has this translation of the Scriptures ever been omitted².

It is to be always remembered, that Wiclid's translation was made entirely from the Latin text, the only one at that time in use. It may justly be regarded as a noble monument, not only of religion, but of letters. It exhibits our language in the most perfect form which it had then attained, and might, alone, have been sufficient to save it from relapsing into barbarism. The benefits conferred on the English tongue by our present version, are acknowledged by all who have entered deeply into the spirit of our national literature : and there can be little doubt that the labours of the Reformer were calculated to do a similar service to our genuine Anglo-Norman dialect, two centuries earlier. It is the opinion of Mr. Turner, who has diligently studied the *origines* of our literature, that Wiclid's ordinary style is less perspicuous and cultivated than that of Rolle, who lived and wrote many years earlier ; a remark more or less applicable to all his works, except the version of the Scriptures : and there, Mr. Turner observes, "the unrivalled combination of

⁹ Knighton, de Eventibus Angliæ, col. 2644, quoted by Lewis, p. 83, 84.

¹ Hom. on Matt. xi. 23. See Baber, Hist. Acc. p. lxix.

² Baber, Hist. Acc. p. lxix.

force, simplicity, dignity, and feeling in the original, compel his old English, as they seem to compel every other language into which it is translated, to be clear, interesting, and energetic ³."

It is scarcely to be imagined that, in the completion of his task, Wiclit disdained to receive such assistance as he could procure. The labour must have been such as to overpower almost any single-handed strength, unless it was exclusively devoted to the work, instead of being divided by a vast variety of other engagements and undertakings. But to what extent Wiclit was assisted in his great work, it is now quite impossible to ascertain. There has, however, descended to us nothing which renders it doubtful, that the whole was completed under his superintendence and revision, and put forth on his responsibility,—or that the substantial honours of the enterprise are, righteously, his own.

The manuscripts of this version are, to this day, exceedingly numerous. They are to be found, not only in the great public libraries of the empire ⁴, but

³ A specimen or two of Wiclit's Translation will be found in the Appendix.

⁴ The British Museum, Lambeth, Sion College, the University libraries, particular colleges, and some cathedrals. Some few of these MSS. differ so materially from the rest, that we are led to believe that there must have been two distinct translations of Scripture. Some passages have no other correspondence except that which arises from the circumstance of their having been rendered from one common original, the Latin Vulgate. In general, however, the resemblance is such as to leave no doubt that the earlier translation must have been consulted by the author of the later. Baber, Hist. Acc. p. lxix. &c. where the reader may find some specimens of their nearest agreement, and their most remarkable variation.

even in the collections of private individuals. We may readily judge of the activity and eagerness with which they were originally circulated, when we find that such a multitude of copies have still survived the exterminating zeal of Papal inquisitors. That the appearance of it spread alarm and indignation among the clergy, is perfectly notorious. The displeasure of the hierarchy sufficiently appears from the fact, that, some ten years after this period, a Bill was actually brought into the House of Lords, to forbid the perusal of the English Bible by the laity. This measure, indeed, was manfully opposed by John of Gaunt, who rose up in his place, and said, that “the people of England would not be the dregs of all men, seeing all nations besides them had the Scriptures in their own tongue⁵.⁵” But the seal was, nevertheless, afterwards fixed to the condemnation of all such attempts, by a constitution of Archbishop Arundel, which begins by declaring, that “it is a perilous thing, as Saint Jerome testifieth, to translate the text of Holy Scripture from one idiom into another; since it is no easy matter to retain in every version an identity of sense; and the same blessed Jerome, even though he were inspired, confesseth that herein he had, himself, been frequently mistaken.” It was, therefore, enacted and ordained, that, “thenceforth, no one should translate any text of sacred Scripture, by his own authority, into the English or any other tongue, in the way of book, tract, or treatise; and that no publication of this sort, composed in the time of John Wiclid, or

⁵ Lewis, 84.

since, or thereafter to be composed, should be read, either in part or in whole, either in public or in private, under the pain of the greater excommunication, until such translation should be approved by the diocesan of the place ; or, if the matter should require it, by a provincial council : every one who should act in contradiction to this order, to be punished as an abettor of *heresy* and error⁶." Such was the decree of the convocation held at St. Paul's in 1408 : and the persecutions which followed this edict are amply attested by various episcopal registers.

The objections urged at that day, and still more confidently in subsequent ages, by the Romish Church, to the liberty of free access to Question of appeal to private judgment. the Scriptures, are now tolerably well known ; and it may be conceded, that there is about them, at first sight, an air of plausibility, which may render them dangerous to many an honest mind. It is insisted, that the sanctity of the Divine Oracles is tarnished by the rash curiosity of ignorant men ; that the Word of God, when cited by all parties, either for refutation or defence, is degraded into an implement of unhallowed warfare ; that the appeal to private judgment engenders a spirit of arrogance, a contempt for authority, and a lust for perpetual innovation ; and that its tendency is to break down the solid unity of the Faith, and to shiver it into fragments. And, by writers who have lived since the period of the Reformation, it has been

⁶ Wilkins's *Concilia*, vol. iii. p. 317. *Constit. vii. Archbp. Arundel. 1408.*

broadly asserted, that the innumerable swarm of sects which have sprung up under this system, are evident marks of the Divine displeasure against such rashness and presumption. The reply to these allegations is, that even schism itself is a less evil than an uniformity of error and perversion ; and, that no multiplication of divisions could be so pernicious, as the general prostration of mind and conscience before the authority of any uninspired tribunal. To any independent thinker, however, of the fourteenth century, the subject would naturally present itself in a much more simple light. He would be little embarrassed by difficulties, such as those which have, subsequently, arisen out of an almost unfettered licence of interpretation. We accordingly

Wyclif's Defence
of the Translation
of the Scriptures. find that Wiclit defends the translation purely on the ground that the Scriptures must have been designed for the guidance of all Christian men, of every degree without exception. He affirms that they who called it heresy to open the Scriptures in English, in effect condemned the Holy Ghost, who gave the truth in tongues to the Apostles ; that priest or prelate might be ignorant, mistaken, or unfaithful ; that, at least, by opening the Scriptures to the people, the priesthood would be relieved from all suspicion of concealment or deception ; that each man must be answerable to God for the use of talents entrusted to him ; and that an answer by prelate or *attorney*, will not avail before the judgment-seat of Christ ?.

Wiclit's *Wicket. Doctrina Christiana*, lib. ii. ad fin. *Speculum secularium Dominorum*. See Lewis, p. 86, 87.

It must be allowed, however, that the reasoning of Wiclit on this subject would have been much more valuable than it is, if it had been qualified by certain very needful cautions. To "search the Scriptures" may be a privilege which, naturally, belongs to all who are to stand or fall by the Scriptures ; but the privilege is one which involves much difficulty, and withal, a deep responsibility. The abstract right of private judgment can be denied to none, whether with reference to their secular or their eternal interests. In secular matters, however, the right is seldom resorted to in its full theoretical extent. The exercise of it is, in practice, limited and modified, sometimes by advice, and sometimes even by authority. Much more is it necessary that men should be warned against the peril of "leaning to their own understandings," and following their own fancies, when consulting the oracles by which their eternal destinies are to be determined. It would, therefore, have been well if the Reformer had accompanied his translation of the Scriptures with a careful inculcation of the obedience reasonably due to those who have made the Scriptures their especial study, and who are invested with the sacred office of interpreters and guides. Instead of this, he seems to have thought that little more was required, than to make the Bible accessible to all men. And as might have been expected, the ministers of religion, throughout their various ranks and orders, immediately began to exclaim, that, if these notions were to be endured, they might as well throw up their functions at once. If all might consult the divine oracles without the intervention of

the priesthood, what further demand could there be for the services of the sacred ministers? The resentment of the hierarchy did not die away in mere “sound and fury.” More substantial proofs of their displeasure were soon in active preparation.

Wiclid's version proscribed by the Church, but nevertheless widely circulated. It will here be proper to notice the astonishing rapidity with which copies of this work were circulated among all

classes of the people, in defiance of obstructions, which, at this day, it is difficult for us to appreciate, or even to imagine. Our familiarity with the powers of the press almost disables us from realizing to our conceptions the impediments through which literature had to force its way, in the ages previous to that invention. Those impediments, however, may be partially estimated from the fact, disclosed to us by the register of Alnwick, Bishop of Norwich in 1429, that the cost of a Testament of Wiclid's version, was no less than *2l. 16s. 8d.*, a sum, probably, equal to *30l.* of our present money, and considerably more than half the annual income which was then considered adequate to the maintenance of a substantial yeoman. To procure a copy of the whole English Bible must, therefore, have demanded a sacrifice greater than that which, in our days, is required to command the most sumptuous elegancies of literature. To this discouragement must be added the anxiety and the danger which this precious possession carried with it. During the time which elapsed from the reign of Henry IV. to the period of the Reformation, the owner of a fragment of Wiclid's Bible, or indeed of any other portion of his writings, was conscious of harbouring a witness, whose appear-

ance would infallibly consign him to the dungeon, and possibly to the flames. He must, consequently, have eaten the bread of life *in secret, and with carefulness*, and must have drank the waters of life *with astonishment and trembling of heart*. And yet, in defiance of obstruction and of persecution, the work went on. Neither the cost of literary treasures, nor the jealous vigilance of an omnipresent inquisition, were able to repress it. The stream continued to force its way, in a sort of subterraneous course, till the season arrived when it should burst forth into the light of day⁸.

The year 1381 was rendered unhappily memorable by the insurrection of the peasantry of England; an event some notice of which is forced into a narrative of the life of Wiclid, by the assertion of some historians, that the popular excesses were occasioned, or greatly aggravated, by the diffusion of his doctrines. By one of these annalists it is gravely conjectured that this calamity was a clear indication of the displeasure of Heaven against the supineness of the hierarchy, which had

1381.

Causes assigned for it by Papal writers.

⁸ The rapid circulation of Wiclid's Bible may afford some illustration of the views of Mr. Maitland; who has shown that, in spite of all difficulties, books were not quite so scarce, in mediæval times, as may now be generally imagined; and that the Dark Ages were not so dark as they have been painted. He has produced evidence, that, during that period, even the Scriptures were more accessible to those who could use them,—were, in fact, more used, and by a greater number of persons,—than some modern writers would lead us to suppose. Maitland on the Dark Ages, London, 1844, p. 187, &c. The main objection of the hierarchy of those ages was to the dispersion of the Bible in the vernacular languages.

omitted to repress, with due vigour, the impiety of Wiclit and his followers, in disseminating the perverse and damnable doctrines of Berengarius, respecting the body and blood of Christ. And this surmises the chronicler, with all imaginable solemnity, strengthens by reference to the extraordinary fact, that the commotions were simultaneous all over England ; and that they occurred precisely within the octaves of that festival, in which the mystery of the transubstantiation is celebrated by the Church ! He adds, that, although it may be reasonably believed that Archbishop Sudbury (who was brutally murdered by the rabble) may have died a martyr, yet the barbarous manner of his death was probably appointed in mercy, as a needful expiation for the sinful laxity of his discipline. Others there were, he confesses, who ascribed the affliction to the scandalous lives, the odious tyranny, the shameless hypocrisy, nay, the downright atheism, prevalent among the wealthy and the noble of the land : and many, again, were persuaded that the measure of national iniquity was filled up by the coarse profligacy, and rebellious insolence, of the populace themselves. And his conclusion, upon the whole matter, is, that in this instance, the wrath of God manifestly came down upon the children of disobedience⁹. A more modern historian, without the slightest appearance of doubt or hesitation, attributes much of the excitement to the notions, ascribed to Wiclit, and disseminated by his followers,—namely, that the right of property was founded in grace, and that no one who

⁹ Wals. p. 281.

was, by sin, a traitor to God, could be justly entitled to the services of man¹. A more plain and rational account of the affair surely is, that this was one of those terrible and convulsive efforts, by which

Its real cause, probably, the wretchedness and degradation of the peasantry.

the lower classes, in the fourteenth century, laboured to heave off the load of intolerable servitude ;—a phenomenon of the same class with jacquerie of France, and the rebellion of the Flemings ;—a servile war, the natural effect of wretchedness, goaded to frenzy by the unfeeling arrogance and luxury of the great. The cruelty of the English aristocracy may, indeed, have been considerably less atrocious than that which drove the peasantry of other countries to despair. But the circumstances of the age were such as probably tempted them to harass their dependants with more grinding exaction than they had experienced in preceding times. The landed proprietors had been impoverished, partly by an unprecedented and long-continued severity of taxation, and partly by their own inordinate craving for foreign luxuries of the most costly description. The embarrassment thus produced, naturally engendered cupidity ; and probably, gave birth to an inhuman disregard for the comfort of the poor, more especially of those who held their lands by the tenure of unmitigated villainage². In all this, there was power sufficient to raise the tempest, which threatened all the embankments of civilized society, without the aid of fanatical

¹ Ling. vol. iv. p. 236.

² See Hallam, Middle Ages, vol. iv. p. 265—267.

Possibly aggravated by the growing impatience of Ecclesiastical Power. *agitation.* It is true, that the growing hatred of ecclesiastical dominion may have intimately connected itself with a wild impatience of all authority whatever. It is, also, possible that the voice of loud invective against the Church, may have assisted to call up, from the depths of the popular discontent, a mad ungovernable spirit of anarchy and rebellion. The charges with which the clergy were assailed, were, indeed, frequently such, as an exasperated populace might easily transfer to abuse and tyranny of every description: and nothing can be more hopeless than the attempt to deny, that the language adopted by Wiclif, or his itinerant preachers, was, occasionally, violent enough to compromise the safety of nearly all existing institutions. But there is nothing in this

Injustice of ascribing it to the religious opinions of Wiclif and his followers. concession to justify the speculations of the Papal writers, who connect the Rebellion of 1381, directly and immediately, with the doctrinal heresies of

Wiclif. It has been truly remarked, that their charges are just as absurd as it would be to ascribe the outrages of the Anabaptists of Munster to the theological opinions of Luther³. Equally unfounded is the insinuation, that the principles entertained by the Reformer were deliberately hostile to all authority, whether spiritual or secular, and that he deserved the confidence of the State as little as that of the Church. However perplexing it might be to defend him from the imputation of some pernicious notions, and much unguarded phraseology, the whole

³ Hallam, Middle Ages, vol. iii. p. 266.

course of his life, and the *general* tenor of his writings, must acquit him of the character of a political incendiary. Some further reflections, however, on this subject, will find a proper place, when we come to a review of the opinions of Wiclif, and the proceedings of his “Poor Priests,” or travelling preachers.

CHAPTER VII.

1381, 1382.

Wyclif hitherto employed in exposing the corruptions of the Papacy—He now engages in the Sacramental Controversy—Notice of the history of this question—Paschasius Radbert—Bertram, and Johannes Scotus—Berengarius—Transubstantiation established by Innocent III.—Metaphysical explanation of it by the Mendicants—This doctrine unknown to the Anglo-Saxon Church—Probably introduced into England at the Conquest—Wyclif attacks the doctrine from the chair of theology—His positions denounced, on pain of excommunication—He resolves to appeal to the King—He is desired by John of Gaunt to abstain from the subject—Courtney succeeds to the Primacy—Synod held by him at the Preaching Friars, in London—The Assembly disturbed by an Earthquake—Address and self-possession of Courtney—Twenty-four Conclusions, ascribed to Wyclif, condemned—Measures taken for the suppression of his Doctrines—Petition of the Spiritual Lords against the Lollards—Royal Ordinance, empowering Sheriffs to arrest and imprison the Preachers of false doctrine—It is introduced into the Parliament Roll without the consent of Lords or Commons—Further proceedings of the Primate—Wyclif himself not yet summoned before the Archbishop—Wyclif's complaint to the King and Parliament—Petition of the Commons against the Ordinance for the suppression of erroneous doctrine—Wyclif summoned to answer before the Convention at Oxford—He is abandoned by the Duke of Lancaster—He maintains his opinions—He delivers in two Confessions, one in English, the other in Latin—His English Confession—His Latin Confession—He is banished from Oxford—He retires to Lutterworth—He is summoned by the Pope to appear before him—His answer.

Wyclif hitherto employed in exposing the corruptions of the Papacy.

THE attacks of Wyclif had hitherto been principally directed against enormities, which had long been raising up a spirit of disaffection towards the Romish hier-

archy. Up to this time, he had appeared as the advocate of the University, in defence of her privileges—as the champion of the Crown, in the vindication of its rights and prerogatives—as the friend of the people, in the preservation of their property—and as the ally of the whole world, against the abuse of ecclesiastical power.

He was now to appear in a somewhat different, and still more arduous, position. He now engages in the Sacramental controversy. He was about to encounter an adver-

sary against whom the conflict was to be, chiefly, carried on in the regions of metaphysical abstraction, to which the combatant could hardly be followed by the sympathies, or even by the understandings, of mankind. So long as he was seen to grapple with the practices of the Papacy and its adherents, or with those doctrines and principles which were more closely connected with its palpable abuses,—so long he was supported by the patronage of the great, and by the applauses of the many. But when once he plunged into the darkness of the sacramental controversy, the scene of contention was removed from the sphere of general intelligence or interest. They who were loudest in their outcry against the Church, were, in that age, but little disturbed by her most extravagant demands on their credulity. So that when we are told by the chroniclers, that every second man that might be met on the road was a Lollard¹, we are not to conclude that the country swarmed with persons whose minds were in a state of insurrection against erroneous belief; but that there prevailed a very general indignation against

¹ See Knighton, 2663, &c.

the pride and greediness of the Pope and his ministers, and an increasing strength of persuasion that the ecclesiastical system required an unsparing reform.

It would be unseasonable to introduce here a lengthened history of the disputes which had long agitated the Church, respecting the mysterious presence of the body of Christ in the eucharistic elements. That it was present, in some mode or other which sufficiently warranted the faithful to speak of it as *really* present, seems to have been the general and almost unanimous opinion of the Church from the earliest times ; although, as may readily be imagined, every attempt to explain this *reality*, and to reconcile it with the notion of a mere sacramental or symbolical presence, was sure to involve the disputants in a labyrinth of perplexity and self-contradiction.

Up to the middle of the ninth century, however, as Mosheim observes², "both reason and folly had been left free in this matter ; nor had any imperious mode of faith suspended the exercise of the one, or restrained the extravagance of the other." The first person who undertook to reduce the doctrine of the Church to certainty and precision, was Pascasius Radbert, a monk, afterwards abbot of Corbey ; who maintained, that, after the consecration of the bread and wine, nothing remained of those symbols but the outward figure ; under which figure, the very same body that suffered on the cross was *really* and *locally* present.

² Eccl. Hist. vol. ii. p. 340.

This opinion was speedily opposed by ^{Bertram, and Jo-} the two eminent divines, Bertram and ^{hannes Scotus.} Johannes Scotus : but the controversy was still left to exhaust itself, uncontrolled by any definitive sentence of the Church. In the eleventh century, when the dispute burst out again, the celebrated Berengarius, Archbishop of Angers, ^{Berengarius.} persisted in teaching that the elements, after consecration, preserved their natural and essential qualities, being nothing more than symbols or representatives of the body and blood of the Saviour. By this time, however, the hierarchy of Rome appear to have become sensible, that the doctrine, which gave to the sacramental rite the character of a prodigy, was admirably fitted to exalt the mystic and hierurgical dignity of the priesthood. The theology of Berengarius was, accordingly, assailed with vehemence. The terrors of spiritual power were levelled against it, fiercely and angrily, by Leo IX. and Nicholas II.; somewhat more faintly and doubtfully by Gregory VII. The heretic was compelled to sign, successively, three distinct confessions, each differing from the other, but all of them amounting to an abjuration of his own real opinions ; and his latter days were passed in exercises of penitence for his unworthy dissimulation³. It was not, however, till the beginning of the thirteenth century, that all liberty of speech and opinion, relative to this subject, was finally suppressed. In the fourth Council of Lateran, (which was held by Innocent III. in 1215, and at which were assembled

³ Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 558—569.

a vast concourse of ecclesiastics, besides the ambassadors of nearly all the powers of Europe,) he formally established that doctrine, which, to the present hour, is held by the Church of Rome, as the only orthodox and true one, and which, from The doctrine of that time has been uniformly designated by the term transubstantiation. by Innocent III. It is obvious that the grand difficulty which thoughtful persons would have to encounter, in receiving the doctrine in question, arose from the circumstance, that the mystic words of the priest left the sensible qualities of the sacramental bread wholly unaltered. That Christ himself should, in some mysterious and spiritual sense, be present at the solemnity, might not be too much for the faith of the most enlightened believer. But, that the holy thing received by the communicant should still retain precisely the same shape, the same colour, and the same taste, which belonged to the unconsecrated wafer, was a subject of endless perplexity to all, except those who were prepared for an unconditional surrender of their faculties to the authority of the Church. In order, therefore, to nullify the Metaphysical explanation of the doctrine by the Mendicants. stubborn testimony of the senses, the Mendicant Orders, who were the creatures of the Pontiff, called in metaphysics to the aid of superstition. They scrupled not to maintain, that, although substances are usually known to us only by their sensible properties or accidents, yet no substance is, in its own nature, inseparable from its accidents. A miracle might disunite the qualities from their proper subject; and these qualities might continue to act upon our senses,

even after the subject itself was destroyed or withdrawn. And such a miracle, they contended, was actually performed at every celebration of the Eucharist. The *substance* of the bread was taken away, the instant the words of consecration had passed the lips of the priest, and the *substance* of Christ's body was introduced in its place. Our senses, it is true, give us no intelligence of this substitution ; for our senses take no cognizance of the interior essences of things. The substance of the body of our Lord, when invested with the sensible properties of the wafer, would, consequently, affect the senses precisely as the wafer itself affected them, previously to its consecration. To appeal, therefore, to the evidence of the senses, was, in effect, to call in witnesses which could depose nothing as to the matter in question. And the grand difficulty being thus disposed of, mankind were left without excuse, if they refused the mystery of *transubstantiation* !

That the corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament was never acknowledged as an article of faith by our ancient Anglo-Saxon Church, seems to be beyond all reasonable question. The opinion entertained respecting that mystery, previously to the Conquest, is distinctly expressed in a very ancient homily, translated into the Saxon tongue, probably from a Latin original no longer extant, by *Ælfric*, abbot of St. Alban's, in the tenth century ; and further, from two epistles of the same writer, one of them addressed to *Wulfine*, bishop of *Sherborne*, the other to *Wulfric*, archbishop of *Canterbury*⁴. The homily in question

This doctrine unknown to the Anglo-Saxon Church.

⁴ This Anglo-Saxon homily, and the two epistles above men-

contains a copious exposition of the sacramental doctrine ; and its language expressly negatives the tenet of transubstantiation. " Much," it says, " is betwixt the body in which Christ suffered, and the body which is hallowed to housell. The body, truly, in which Christ suffered, was born of the flesh of Mary, with a reasonable soul ; his *ghostly* body, which we call the housell, is gathered of many grains, without blood, bone, limb, or soul. And, therefore, nothing is to be understood therein bodily, but all is *ghostly* to be understood⁵." Again, " Truly it is, as we have said, Christ's body and his blood, not bodily, but ghostly : and ye should not search how this is done, but hold it in your belief, that it is done⁶." Precisely conformable to this is the language of the two epistles. " Understand now that the Lord, who could turn the bread, before his suffering, into his body, and the wine into his blood, *ghostly*, the selfsame Lord blesseth daily, through the priest's hands, bread and wine to his *ghostly* body, and his *ghostly* blood⁷." " The lively bread is not *bodily* so, notwithstanding, —not the selfsame body that Christ suffered in ; nor

tioned, also in Anglo-Saxon, were printed by John Day, 1567, under the title of " A Testimony of Antiquitie, shewing the auncient faith in the Church of England, touching the Sacrament," &c. They are followed by a certificate of the faithfulness and accuracy with which they were taken from the ancient books, signed by Archbishop Parker, and fifteen other bishops. The copy which I have seen is in the public library of Cambridge. It is in a small volume, (Ff. 16. 78,) and is bound up with several other tracts.

⁵ Testimony of Antiquitie, &c. p. 36.

⁶ Ibid. p. 38, 39.

⁷ Ibid. p. 64.

is the holy wine the Saviour's blood which was shed for us in bodily *thing* (or reality), but in *ghostly understanding*⁸." These testimonies are the more remarkable, because they are mixed up with other matters which savour grossly of Romish superstition, and shew that the sentiments expressed on the subject of the Eucharist, were dictated by no spirit of opposition to the authority of the Church. In the next century, however, came the Norman Conquest ; and this event consigned the see of Canterbury to the care of Lanfranc, who was not only a devoted adherent to the Papacy, but one of the most eminent and powerful among the antagonists of Berengarius. There is still extant a dissertation of his concerning the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, in which he labours to establish the reality of the corporeal presence, in opposition to the doctrine of the Archbishop of Angers : and, from that period till the days of Wiclid, the Romish doctrine, as first maintained by Radbert, and as subsequently explained and vindicated by the Mendicants, appears to have gradually and silently established itself in our national Church.

The sentiments of Wiclid on this point must, probably, have been already known to his friends and

⁸ Ibid. p. 70. The reader, who is desirous of more ample information on this subject, may find it in the seventh sermon of Mr. Soames's Bampton Lectures for 1830 ; which exhibits "that adamantine chain of testimony, extending from Bede to the Norman Conquest, which proves, even to demonstration, that ancient England was taught expressly to deny the leading distinctive doctrine of modern Rome."

his parishioners ; for the subject is of frequent recurrence in his sermons. But it was 1381. Wiclif attacks the doctrine of transubstantiation from the chair of theology that he commenced his formal attack against the received doctrine, and more especially against the metaphysical subtleties introduced by the Friars. In the lectures delivered by him in 1381, he put forth twelve conclusions, in which he maintained that "the consecrated host we see upon the altar, is neither Christ, nor any part of him, but an effectual sign of him ; and that transubstantiation, identification, or impanation, rest upon no scriptural ground⁹." By the religious orders, who were then in high predominance at Oxford, this was regarded as His positions denounced, on pain of excommunication, &c. a declaration of war. A convention was immediately summoned by the Chancellor, William de Berton ; and by this assembly, which consisted of twelve doctors, eight of whom were either monks or mendicants, a decree was unanimously pronounced¹, which first

⁹ Lewis, c. vi. p. 91.

¹ This decree is printed at length in Wilkins, *Conc.* vol. iii. p. 170, with the signatures of the twelve doctors, of whom four only are seculars. The accounts which have hitherto been given of the various proceedings against Wiclif at this period, are so confused, that I cannot feel confident of the perfect accuracy of all the following details. The narrative of Lewis is so perplexed, that it is scarcely possible to ascertain from it the precise order of events. The facts of chief importance, however, seem clear enough ; namely, that Wiclif was vigorously prosecuted by the ecclesiastical authorities ; that in the course of the proceedings he appealed to the king in Parliament ; that the Duke of Lancaster withdrew his countenance ; that Wiclif derived but little support from the Parliament,

recites the substance of Wiclif's conclusions (namely, that the material elements remain unaltered after consecration, and that Christ is not *essentially, substantially, or corporeally* present in the sacrament, but only *figuratively, or tropically*); and then proceeds to declare and affirm the doctrine of transubstantiation in its fullest extent. It concludes by denouncing imprisonment, suspension of scholastic exercises, and the greater excommunication, as the penalties of teaching or listening to the opposite doctrine. The instrument, thus prepared, was dispatched to the school of the Augustines,—where Wiclif was actually seated, as Professor, enforcing the condemned positions,—and was there promulgated in the hearing of his pupils. The suddenness of the invasion threw the Reformer into momentary confusion. He, however, soon recovered his self-possession, defied his adversaries to refute his opinions, and ^{Wiclif appeals to} proclaimed his resolution to appeal to ^{the King.} the king².

which began to be alarmed at the progress of the *Lollards*; but that, after all, the prosecution ended in nothing worse than his banishment from Oxford, and his retirement to Lutterworth for the remainder of his life.

² Wilk. Conc. p. 171. Wiclif has, sometimes, been censured, and not unjustly, for the coarseness of his invectives; but it would be difficult to find, in his pages, a match for the following language of Walsingham:—"At this time," (A.D. 1381,) he says, "that old hypocrite, that angel of Satan, that emissary of Antichrist, the not-to-be named John Wiclif, or rather *Wickebelus*, the heretic, continued his ravings, and seemed as if he would drink up Jordan, and plunge all Christians into the abyss, by reviving the damnable opinions of Berengarius, &c. &c." He then tells a story about a certain knight of high

This resolution appears to have produced great astonishment. That a person charged with theological error should think of appealing, not to the Pope, not even to the bishop or ecclesiastical ordinary, but to the Crown, would very reasonably be deemed an instance of high contumacy against the spiritual powers. The measure, it must be confessed, was one of singular audacity. Its boldness seems to have been

He is desired by John of Gaunt to abstain from speaking on the Eucharist. too much for the spirit of John of Gaunt himself, the illustrious friend and patron of the Reformer. For no sooner did

he receive intelligence of it, than he posted to Oxford for the express purpose of forbidding Wiclid to speak further on this matter. But the only effect produced by the authority of the Primate, the sentence of the Chancellor, and the influence of his protector, was to reduce him to silence, until the opportunity should arrive for removing his cause to the supreme tribunal.

On the 14th of June, 1381, the see of Canterbury became vacant by the death of Simon Sudbury, who was massacred in the Tower, by the fury of the in-

Courtney succeeds to the primacy. surgent peasantry. His successor was William Courtney, then translated from the see of London ; a personage highly

repute, near Salisbury, who ran away with the sacrament ; and, in order to show that it was no better than so much household bread, irreverently devoured it, together with oysters, and onions, and wine. The knight, it seems, survived the sacrilege ; but being afterwards brought to a better mind, testified his sorrow, by submission to very heavy penances. And this, says the historian, I have the more fully related, that it may appear what evils were scattered over the land by that beast from the bottomless pit, that colleague of Satan, John Wiclid, or *Wickebelus*. Wals. p. 256.

connected, and distinguished for his passionate devotion to the Papal chair. On the 6th of May, 1382, he received the pall from Rome ; and, on the 17th of the same month, a convention of divines

was held, by his mandate, at the priory of the Preaching Friars, in London. ^{1382.} Synod held by him, at the Preaching Friars, in London.

The assembly consisted of eight bishops and fourteen doctors of civil or canon law, together with seventeen doctors and six bachelors of divinity, all of whom, except one, were either Mendicants or Monks³. At this meeting the firmness of the archbishop was severely put to the test. On the commencement of their deliberations, it so happened that the whole city was shaken by an earthquake. The convulsion immediately produced some unsteadiness in the counsels of the Synod, many of whom appeared to regard it as a sign of the displeasure of heaven against their proceedings. The Primate, however, with singular address and self-possession, converted the portent to his own advantage. He assured them that the commotion they had witnessed, being produced by the expulsion of noxious vapours from the earth, was evidently a most auspicious intimation, that the purity and the peace of the Church could be secured only by the violent removal of all rebellious spirits from her communion. The courage of the assembly being thus effectually rallied, they proceeded with their work of inquisition. Twenty-four conclusions, ascribed to Wiclif, were produced, which, it was affirmed, had been publicly preached

The assembly disturbed by an earthquake.

Address and self-possession of Courtney.

Twenty-four conclusions, ascribed to Wiclif, condemned.

³ See Wilk, Cone. vol. iii. p. 157, 158.

among the nobles and commons of the realm of England; and after three days of "good and mature deliberation," ten of these conclusions were condemned as heretical, and the remaining fourteen were pronounced to be erroneous⁴. The errors of the heretical articles related chiefly to the sacrament, and the mass—to the forfeiture of the priestly function and power by mortal sin—to the needlessness of auricular confession—to the unlawfulness of temporal possessions held by the clergy—and to the derivation of the Pope's authority from the Emperor: and one of those articles actually contained the monstrous assertion, that God ought to obey the devil! The fourteen erroneous propositions, in substance, maintained that it was *heretical* for a prelate to excommunicate any one without knowing him to be already excommunicated by God, and *treasonable* to excommunicate one who has appealed to the king; that the Gospel may be preached without licence from Pope or prelate—that tithes are purely eleemosynary—that delinquent priests may be stripped of their endowments by the secular power—that to give alms to the friars is an excommunicable offence—and that the religious Orders, whether endowed or mendicant, are sinful and unchristian.

Instructions were speedily despatched to the bishops Measures taken of London and of Lincoln, enjoining for the suppression of Wiclif's them rigorously to suppress the dissemination of these doctrines: and, by the

⁴ These conclusions may be seen in Wilk. Conc. vol. iii. p. 157, 158, together with the signatures of the parties who condemned them.

latter of these prelates, letters mandatory were immediately issued, charging with the execution of the decree, not only the abbots and priors, but all the clergy and ecclesiastical functionaries, throughout the archdeaconry of Leicester, within which the rectory of Lutterworth is situated. Similar instructions were forwarded by the archbishop to one Peter Stokes, a zealous Carmelite of Oxford, requiring him diligently to publish the decisions of the synod throughout the University. And, in order that the crusade might be conducted with all impressive solemnity, it was appointed that, at the ensuing Whitsuntide, the devotion of the metropolis should be awakened by a religious procession to St. Paul's. On the day fixed, a long train, both of ecclesiastics and laymen, were seen moving bare-footed, towards the cathedral; and on their arrival there, the pulpit was mounted by a Carmelite friar, who spoke of the perils of the Church, of the virulence of her enemies, and of the duty incumbent, in such a crisis, on all her faithful children⁵. These measures of the primate were seconded by the zeal of the spiritual lords of Parliament, who united in a petition that a remedy might be pro-
Petition of the spiritual lords against the Lollards.
vided against the innumerable errors and impieties of the *Lollards*⁶. The doc-
trines complained of, in addition to those which have been already stated, were, that Urban VI. is the son

⁵ Knighton, 2650. Lewis, 109.

⁶ It would be a waste of time to detain the reader with a dissertation on the origin of this term, here applied to the followers of Wiclid. Every thing that can be collected on the subject may be found in Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 355—358.

of Antichrist, and that there hath been no true Pope since the days of St. Silvester ; that they who trust in the Pope's indulgences are accursed, and that none are obliged to obey his canons decretal ; that the worship of images is idolatrous and execrable ; that pictures of the Holy Trinity are not to be endured ; that Saints are not to be supplicated for their intercession ; that priests and deacons are bound by their orders to preach, although they have no cure of souls ; that the clergy who do not minister the sacraments are to be removed ; and lastly, in this long list of heresies and errors, that " ecclesiastical men ought not to ride on such great horses, nor use so large jewels, precious garments, or delicate entertainments, but to renounce them all, and give them to the poor, walking on foot, and taking staves in their hands, to take on them the appearance of poor men, giving others the benefit of their example."

Royal Ordinance, empowering the Sheriffs to arrest and imprison the preachers of false doctrine. This application was attended with one very remarkable consequence. It produced a Royal Ordinance, which,— after reciting the activity and audacity with which notorious and pernicious errors were circulated by evil persons, under dissimulation of great holiness, preaching in churches, church-yards, markets, fairs, and other open places, without the licence of the ordinary,—empowers the sheriffs of counties to arrest such preachers and their abettors, and to detain them in prison, until they should justify themselves according to law, and reason of Holy Church'.

⁷ The document is given by Fox. See Wordsworth's Eccl. Biog. vol. i. p. 62, 63.

This document, it should be observed, was altogether destitute of the force of law ; for it contains no intimation whatever, of the assent either of Lords or Commons. It, nevertheless, was introduced into the Parliament Roll, among the statutes of the year, and has the distinction of being the first penal enactment on our Statute Book, against heretical gravity of opinion. In the next Parliament, indeed, the Commons declared, that it had been passed without their assent or concurrence, and prayed that it might be annulled, as it never was their intent to bind themselves to the bishops, more than their ancestors had been bound in times past. But though the king agreed to their petition, this spurious statute " still remains among our laws, unrepealed, except by desuetude, and by inference from acts of much later times ^{8.}"

Armed with this formidable, but unlawful power, the Primate assumed the title of Inquisitor of heretical gravity throughout the whole province of Canterbury ; and immediately directed his attention to the extirpation of heresy from the University of Oxford. The Sessions, at the Grey Friars, were accordingly resumed. The most peremptory instructions were issued to the Chancellor of Oxford, Robert Rigge, commanding him to suppress all attendance on the preaching of certain persons, vehemently and notoriously suspected of heresy, naming, particularly, John Wiclf, and several of his followers.

This Ordinance introduced into the Parliament Roll, though without the consent of Lords or Commons.

⁸ Hallam, Middle Ages, vol. iii. p. 132, 133.

Hereford, Repingdon, Ashton, and Redman. For the rest of their session, the Synod was occupied with the cases of these individuals⁹; but it is somewhat ^{Wiclid himself} remarkable, that Wiclid himself was, ^{not summoned before the Arch-} on this occasion, suffered to remain unmolested. This may, perhaps, be accounted for by the circumstance of his having declared his resolution to appeal to the Crown: for, however disputable might be the regularity of such an appeal, it might be thought scarcely respectful to the Royal authority, wholly to disregard it. But, be this as it may, conformably to his declaration, in the following November, ^{Wiclid's complaint to the King and Parliament. 1382.} he presented his complaint; which, however, was addressed, not to the Crown only, but to the King and Parliament¹⁰. On a perusal of this paper, it will appear evident that he seized the opportunity, thus afforded him, of bringing before the Legislature, not merely the sacramental question, but nearly the whole substance of the cause which it had been the work of his life to advocate and support. He divides his *Gravamina* into four main articles. The first of these exposes the

⁹ The proceedings against them may be found in Wilk. Conc. vol. iii. p. 158—169.

¹⁰ This document is in print. It is entitled, “A complaint of John Wyclif, exhibited to the King and Parliament.” It is not always to be met with separately. The copy consulted by me is to be found in a volume of *Tracts*, in the public Library of Cambridge, (Ff. 14. 8,) together with Wiclid’s Treatise against the Orders of Friars, (which was published in the following year, 1383,) Dr. James’s *Apologie for John Wiclid*, and several other pieces, of various dates.

absurdity of maintaining that a rule of religious life can be laid down by man, more perfect than that which is delivered to us by Jesus Christ and his Apostles ; and he thus strikes at the very root of the authority and influence, claimed, in that age, by those various religious Orders, to which nearly all the reverence of the Christian world was then transferred. The second enlarges on the power of the secular magistrate over the temporal endowments of the Church ; in opposition to the doctrine, then very generally held, and recently affirmed by certain friars at Coventry, that the possessions of the clergy were absolutely beyond the jurisdiction of the State, and that to maintain the contrary, was damnable erroneous and heretical. In the third article, he adverts, certainly in very unmeasured language, to one of his favourite doctrines, viz., that every thing enjoyed by the clergy, more than may be needful for the most moderate necessities of nature, is nothing better than "*theft, rapine, and sacrilege* ;" and that, if the prelates and priests be infected with the sins of idolatry, of covetousness, of pride, simony, *man-quelling*, gluttony, drunkenness, and lechery, they thereby incur, according to God's law, the forfeiture of their tithes and offerings ; which, in that case, may lawfully be given to poor and needy men. The fourth article is the only one, in this paper, in which he adverts to the doctrine of the Eucharist ; and it is remarkable that, on this point, he abstains from all diffuseness either of statement or of argument. He contents himself with simply desiring, that "Christ's teaching and belief of the sacrament of his own body, that is plainly taught by Christ and his Apos-

ties, in Gospels and Pistles, may be taught openlie in churches of Christian people ; the contrarie teaching, and false believe being brought up by cursed hypocrites, and heretics, and worldly priests, unkenning in God's law ; which seem that they are Apostles of Christ, but are *fools !*" He had, no doubt, the sagacity to perceive, that an elaborate discussion of this question would be quite out of place before the barons, knights, and burgesses of the realm, who might yet be fully qualified to estimate the more popular topics upon which he had been enlarging. His "Complaint" closes with a protest against the selfishness of the priesthood, who, he says, were "so busie about worldlie occupation, that they seemen better bayliffs, or reves, than ghostly priests of Jesus Christ."

Petition of the
Commons against
the Ordinance for
the suppression
of erroneous doc-
trine.

This appeal was speedily followed by the petition of the Commons, already adverted to, protesting against the Royal Ordinance, by which the civil authorities were converted into instruments to be wielded by the hierarchy, and employed for the extirpation of heresy. Respecting this enactment, they complain, as we have seen, that whatever was moved therein, was without their assent ; and they, accordingly, require its abrogation. With this requisition, the king, to all appearance, willingly complied ; but the unlawful enactment had already, in a great measure, done its office ; and, notwithstanding its repeal, it was still allowed to retain its place on the records of Parliament. Wiclif, therefore, derived but little benefit from this manifestation of displeasure on the part of the Commons. He

was summoned to answer before the Wiclf summoned-
Convocation at Oxford, respecting the ed to answer be-
opinions expressed in the Articles of fore the Convo-
his "Complaint;" and the doctrine propounded by cation at Oxford.
him, relative to the Eucharist, formed the most prominent subject of inquisition. His integrity and fortitude were now put to a much severer test than any to which they had yet been exposed. In his former perils, it might be suggested that his courage was mainly supported by his secret reliance on the Duke of Lancaster's protection. But now the Duke of Lancaster openly abandoned him¹. His illustri- He is abandoned
by the Duke of
Lancaster.
ous patron (who stood faithfully by him so long as he was engaged in a conflict with the open iniquities of the Papacy,) refused to attend him into these mysterious regions of theological debate. He was unwilling to encounter the wrath of the hierarchy, for the sake of barren questions relative to faith or doctrine. The manner in which Wiclf acquitted himself in this hour of peril has been differently described. According to one account, he produced a confession, Wiclf maintains containing substantially all his former his opinions.
errors; and, like an incorrigible heretic, refuted all

¹ The language of the Sudbury Register (as we have seen above) is, "Post appellationem advenit Dux Lancastriæ prohibens quod de cætero non loqueretur de istâ materia." Wilk. Con. p. 171. But I am not altogether certain, whether this means that the Duke came to Wiclf for this purpose, after he proclaimed, at Oxford, his resolution to appeal; or, not till after he had actually presented his complaint to the King and Parliament: most probably the former.

the doctors of the Second Millenary, on the question of the Sacrament of the Altar ; affirming that, with the exception of Berengarius, they were involved in error ; nay, that Satan was loosed, and had put forth his power, in the person of the Master of the Sentences, and of all who had preached the Catholic faith herein². In another and a very different statement, however, it is affirmed that Wiclf had, all along, relied solely on the protection of the duke, whose patronage alone had saved him and his adherents from ignominy and destruction ; and that when he was called upon to answer for his perversions, “ he *instantly* laid aside his audacious bearing, put on the breastplate of dotage, attempted to disclaim his extravagant and fantastic errors, and protested that the follies he was called upon to answer for, were basely and falsely ascribed to him by the malicious ingenuity of his enemies³. ” That our readers may be enabled to *Delivers in two* judge of these imputations, it will be *pro-*
confessions, one in English, the *per* to call their attention to the two writ-
other in Latin. *ten confessions, one in English the other* in Latin, which contain the substance of his defence.

² — “ Incepit confessionem quandam facere, in quâ con-
tinebatur omnis error pristinus, (sed secretius sub velamine
vario verborum) in quâ dixit suum conceptum, et nisus est
suam sententiam probare. Sed, velut haereticus pertinax,
refutavit omnes doctores de Secundo Millenario, in materiâ
de Sacramento altaris ; et dixit omnes errasse preter Beren-
garium.... Dixit palam Sathanam solutum, et potestatem
habere in Magistro Sententiarum, et in omnibus, qui fidem
Catholicam prædicaverunt.” Sudbury Register, in Wilk.
Conc. vol. iii. p. 171.

³ Knighton, p. 2647.

His confession in English is a concise and tolerably perspicuous document ; framed, as it would seem, with a view to convey his sentiments to the popular apprehension, and, accordingly, weeded from the subtlety of scholastic distinctions. In this paper he affirms, that the sacrament of the altar is *very God's body* in form of bread ; and that if it be broken into three parts, or into a thousand, every one of these is the same *God's body* : and he adds, that it is heresy to believe that this sacrament is God's body, and no bread, since in truth, *it is both together* ; *in its own nature* it is very bread ; but *sacramentally*, it is the body of Christ. And he scruples not to affirm his belief that the earth trembled, when the council was held at the Grey Friars in London, in testimony of God's anger at the heresies maintained by his judges in that assembly. Such will be found to be the substance of this confession⁴ ; and it would be difficult to find in it any thing amounting to a disclaimer of his opinions. In the spirit of it there is nothing which savours of cowardice : for he tells his inquisitors to their face, that their perversions were such as to call down sensible tokens of the Divine displeasure. In the *letter* of it, there is nothing to arraign him of duplicity ; for the doctrine here maintained is, in fact, no other than that which he had uniformly asserted, both before the University at Oxford, and before his people at Lutterworth. If it be urged that there is inconsistency on the face of this paper, since it affirms, in one part,

⁴ It is printed in Lewis, c. vi. p. 102—104, from Knighton, 2649, 2650.

that the sacrament is Christ's body *verily*, and in another, that it is so only *sacramentally*, or spiritually, the answer is, that if this be an inconsistency, it is one which he had in common with multitudes who spoke or wrote on the subject, ages before the transubstantiating theory was ever heard of: nay, he may almost be said to have it, in common with our own Reformers, whose catechism declares that the body and blood of Christ are *verily and indeed* taken by the faithful in the Lord's Supper. The assertion that the body of Christ, in its full integrity, is present in every fragment into which the elements may be divided, is, at first sight, more perplexing. The perplexity, however, will vanish, when we find that such, very nearly, was the language held even by the Church of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers,—a Church which, beyond dispute, was, on this point, free from superstitious pravity. Without any controversy to maintain, without any inquisitors to propitiate, the following is the manner in which the author of the Saxon homily, above adverted to, expresses himself respecting the sacrament of the altar: “The housell is corruptible, and divided into sundry parts, cut by the teeth, and sent into the stomach; nevertheless, *after ghostly might, it is all in every part.* Many receive that holy body; and yet it is so, *all in every part, after ghostly mystery.* Though some take less (than others), yet is there no more might in the more part than in the less; *because it is in all men after the invisible might*⁵.” No man who has perused the

⁵ *Testimonie of Antiquitie*, p. 37, 38.

rest of the discourse can doubt that the words above recited were designed to convey this sense,—namely, that however minutely the sacramental elements might be divided, each portion would be equally efficacious in conveying to the respective communicants, the benefits (whatever they might be) attached to the due receiving of Christ's body. Why, then, is a more Popish meaning given to the words of Wiclf, when he says that, whether the host be broken into three parts or into a thousand, of each part it may be predicated, with equal truth, that it is the same body of Christ?

The Latin confession ⁶ drawn up by Wiclf on this occasion, is very much His Latin confession. longer than the English one, and very much more defective in simplicity. It has, from the beginning to the end of it, the appearance of a series of metaphysical and scholastic enigmas. It begins with avowing, distinctly, that the body of Christ (the same which was born of the Virgin, suffered on the cross, was buried, rose again, ascended into heaven, and now sits at the right hand of God) is *truly* and *really* the sacramental bread and consecrated host. But then he proceeds to qualify this statement by the confession, that he dares not affirm it to be the body of Christ, *essentially*, *substantially*, *corporally*, or *identically*; and in order to make the matter *quite* intelligible, he tells us that there are three modes in which the body of our Lord may exist in the sacrament, namely,—the virtual, the

⁶ This Latin confession is printed in Lewis, Appendix, No. 21, p. 323.

spiritual, and the sacramental: and three modes, more true and real than the former, in which it may exist in heaven,—the substantial, the corporeal, and the dimensional. Then he plunges us into a perfect *jungle* of argumentation, in which I profess myself unable to see my own way, and through which I, therefore, will not attempt to conduct the reader. He emerges, however, at precisely the same conclusion on which he takes his stand in his English confession; namely, that the venerable sacrament of the altar is, *naturally* bread and wine, *sacramentally* the body and blood of Christ; and that the notion, that the Eucharist is a mere accident separated from its proper subject, involves both absurdity and heresy. He concludes, by affirming that the *priests of Baal*, with a mendacity worthy of the school of their father, magnify the consecration of these *accidents*, reckon all masses but their own unworthy to be heard, and pronounce unfit for graduation all who dissent from their impostures; and he expresses his confidence, that truth shall finally overcome them.

The concluding sentences of this paper are hardly in the language of one who had “laid aside his audacity,” or was conscious of any surrender or disguise of his own opinions. To defend the whole document itself from the charge of being intricate, obscure, and in parts almost incomprehensible, would be a much more difficult matter. Indeed, rightly to estimate its merits or demerits, would require the exercise of a mind as familiar as his own with the gibberish of the schools, and with the mode of reasoning, and the habits of thought then prevalent in the seminaries of learning and theology.

That his confessions did not, however, in the estimation of his inquisitors or their adherents, amount to an abandonment of his principles, may be concluded from the fact, that he was assailed by six several antagonists immediately after their publication⁷. It may, also, be inferred, from the result of the proceedings against him. His judges, indeed, did not consign him to martyrdom. The heretic was now well stricken in years; age and toil together had done their work on his constitution; and a few winters more would rid the Church of him that troubled her. It was scarcely worth the hazard of popular commotion and discontent, to light up the fires of persecution for a victim whom the course of nature would probably soon remove. Besides, neither the Church nor the State of England were as yet familiar with the work of blood; and it might have been dangerous to begin it with one who was not only venerable for his years, but still honoured for his labours and his services. And, lastly, the energies of Church discipline were greatly enfeebled, at that period, by the grand schism which cleft the Papacy in twain. Under all these circumstances, it would be sufficient to separate the heretic for ever from the most conspicuous scene of his warfare; and letters were accordingly obtained from the king, which condemned him to banishment from the University of Oxford. The short remnant of Passes the remainder of his days at Lutterworth. his days was passed in the retirement of days at Lutterworth.

⁷ Wordsw. Eccl. Biogr. vol. i. p. 49.

the discharge of his pastoral care, and the continued toils of his study.

It was somewhere about this time
He is summoned by the Pope to appear before that Wiclf received a summons from Urban VI., commanding him to appear in person before the Pontiff, and

to defend himself against the imputation of heresy. It has been generally supposed that before his retirement to Lutterworth, he had been seized with a paralytic attack⁸, severe enough to disable him for so long and formidable a journey. At all events, he declined compliance with the mandate; and the letter in which he excuses himself is, certainly, a very curious document. It forcibly reminds us of the exceedingly dutiful and submissive disobedience of Bishop Grostete, adverted to in a former page⁹. He professes his joyful readiness to give an account of his faith to all true men, and especially to the Pope, whom he acknowledges to be the highest Vicar that Christ has on earth; adding, however, that his greatness is not to be estimated by his worldly pomp, but by his more eminent conformity to the law of Christ, who, while on earth, was the poorest of men, "both in spirit and in having." It was therefore, he submitted, most wholesome counsel, that his Holiness should leave his worldly lordship to worldly lords, and move speedily all his clerks to do the same; and if this opinion of his should be found erroneous, he was willing to be amended, even by death, if it were needful.

⁸ Lewis, p. 113—122.

⁹ Ante, p. 57, 58.

He protests that if he might travel in person, he would, with God's will, go to the Pope ; but Christ had " needed " him to the contrary ; and to Christ's will it became both him and the Pope to submit, unless the Pope were willing to set up openly for Antichrist¹.

¹ This letter is to be found in Lewis, Appendix, No. 23, 333.

CHAPTER VIII.

1382—1384.

Continued labours of Wiclif in his retirement—Crusade for Urban VI. under the command of Spence, Bishop of Norwich—Its failure—Wiclif's “Objections to the Freres”—He condemns the Crusade—His opinions respecting the lawfulness of wars—He conceives his life to be in danger from his enemies—His death—His character—Traditions respecting him at Lutterworth—His preferments—Wiclif not a political Churchman—His unwearied energy—Probable effect of the scholastic discipline on his mind—Alleged coarseness of his invectives—Prevalence of Wiclif's doctrines at Oxford after his death—The testimonial of the University, in honour of his memory, in 1406—Question of its authenticity considered—Persecution of Wiclif's memory by the Papal writers—Prevalence of his opinions in Bohemia—His remains disinterred by a decree of the Council of Constance.

1382. THE palsy which disabled Wiclif for
Continued labours of Wiclif after his attendance on the Pope, was not severe
of Wiclif after his retirement. enough to suspend the exercise of his
mental powers. From the retirement of his parsonage he continued his assaults on the manifold abuses of the ecclesiastical system. Besides his ordinary labours for the pulpit, there are some fourteen or fifteen of his treatises, several of them among the most important of his writings, the publication of which may safely be assigned to this very period. The date of their appearance seems to be fixed to this

time, by their occasional allusion to preceding circumstances and events. It is evident that peril and bodily infirmity, taught him no lessons of indolence or timidity. Never, perhaps, since the commencement of his warfare, was Wiclit more formidable, than during the season of his final banishment to Lutterworth.

We have seen that, on a former occasion, the danger which threatened Wiclit and his followers was powerfully diverted by the grand Papal schism which began to distract the attention of all Europe. The same cause of confusion still continued in operation ; and, at this time, manifested itself in a mode very curiously illustrative of the spirit of that age. A crusade was proclaimed in England for the purpose of establishing the title of Urban VI.¹, in opposition to that of Clement ; and the individual fixed upon to take the command of the British forces employed on this expedition was Henry Spencer, the youthful bishop of Norwich ; a man, in some respects, signally qualified for such a charge. He was of high birth, unimpeachable orthodoxy, notorious for his inflexible devotion to the interests of the Church, and celebrated for that spirit of martial enterprise which, in those times, was regarded as no ungraceful accompaniment to the spiritual function. His detestation of Lollardism was such as to render him worthy of a place in the Commission assembled

1383.
Crusade in support of Urban VI.
under the command of Spencer,
Bishop of Norwich.

¹ Lewis quotes a passage from a MS. entitled *De Sathanæ astu contra fidem*, from which it would appear that Wiclit himself thought Urban's title, if any thing, the better of the two. Lewis, p. 120.

in the chamber of the Preaching Friars, and rendered for ever memorable by the earthquake which had nearly confounded its proceedings. His martial quality had found an opportunity for display during the fearful insurrection of the peasantry, and was said to have been mainly instrumental in preserving his own diocese from the dreadful effects of that commotion. On that occasion, the spiritual guide was forgotten in the feudal baron : and, at the head of his vassals, the adventurous prelate taught “the ribald multitude” (as he styled them,) to respect the laws, which the supineness or the panic of the government had exposed to disgraceful outrage. He is represented to us as “armed to the very nails—grasping his lance in his right hand—burying his spurs in the flanks of his charger—rushing with the fury of a wild boar into the midst of the rascal crowd, and there dealing confusion and havoc around him².” Such was the remarkable personage entrusted with the championship of Urban VI. A public mandate was issued by the Primate³, calling for the prayers of the faithful on behalf of an enterprise, which had for its object the extermination of the heretics : and “marvellous indulgences⁴” were placed by Urban at the disposal of the bishop, which enabled him to collect an incredible amount of treasure ; towards which, the faith and bounty of the female sex supplied the most prodigal contributions. By these stupendous absolutions, both the quick and the dead were released

² Walsingham, p. 278, 279.

³ Wilk. Conc. p. 176, 177.

⁴ “Mirabiles indulgentias,” &c. Knight, p. 2671.

from the guilt and the punishment of sin, provided always that the liberality of the living was fully commensurate with the extent of the benefit conferred. And, that nothing might be wanting to stimulate the believers to profusion, it was fearlessly affirmed by many of the bishop's commissaries, that angels would descend from heaven, at their word, to snatch the souls of the guilty from the abodes of purgatory, and to conduct them without delay to the realms of bliss⁵. A narrative of this expedition would be alien from the purpose of the present work. It must be enough to say, that the impetuous Churchman proved, after all, but a very sorry captain. His intrepidity seems to have been wholly unmixed with any higher military qualities ; and the enterprise had precisely that termination which might be expected from the rashness and obstinacy of its commander. Failure of the crusade. After spreading carnage and devasta-
tion through various parts of Flanders, the crusaders were soon compelled to return, rich in nothing but deeds of waste and bloodshed ; and the fiery prelate himself, on revisiting his country, was greeted with the universal outcry of public scorn⁶.

The spirit of Wiclit was powerfully moved within him by this mad adventure, and the means by which the sinews of its warfare were supplied. It impelled him to renew his contest with the Mendicants : for, the Mendicants, as might be expected, were the busiest among

Wiclit's " Objections to the Freres."

⁵ All this is gravely related by Knighton, as a very edifying affair ! Knight. 2671.

⁶ Froissart. Walsingham.

the tribute-gatherers for the enterprise in question. Accordingly, it was at this period that he put forth his tract, entitled “ Objections to the Freres ;” the same treatise which has been already noticed, and in which, under fifty compendious articles, he concentrates and sums up nearly all the censures which he had ever advanced against their practices and opinions. That the tract in question appeared about this time, is rendered certain, by its allusion to the sacramental controversy, to the Papal schism, and to the war in Flanders, as an expedition, the only object of which was “ to make Christ’s Vicar the wealthiest in the world.” In another of his works, which was also published nearly at the same period, “ The He condemns the Sentence of the Curse Expounded,” he Crusades. makes a direct attack on the infatuation of the Crusaders. He there complains that the Pope brings “ the seal and banner of Christ on the cross, that is the token of peace, mercy, and charity, for to slee all Christen men, for love of twaie false priests, that ben open Anti-Christis, for to meynteyne their worldly state, to oppress Christendom, worse than Jews weren against holy writ, and life of Christ and his apostles.” And he asks, indignantly, “ Why wole not the proud priest of Rome grant full pardon to all men for to live in peace, and charitie, and patience, as he doth to all men to fight and slee Christen men? ? ” The same subject is introduced into his treatise on the seven deadly sins ; and it furnishes him with an occasion of propounding certain eccentric and adventurous opinions relative to the practice of

⁷ Lewis, c. vii. p. 121.

war. The title of conquest he conceives to be utterly worthless and untenable, unless the conquest itself be

Wiclif's opinions respecting the lawfulness of wars.

expressly commanded by the Almighty ; as in the case of the tribes of Israel, when they seized upon the land of Canaan. And, even so, in these latter days, when sin hath wrought the forfeiture of any kingdom, Christ, as the rightful Sovereign of all the earth, may, by his word, deliver that kingdom into the hands of whom he will. But then he affirms, that it is not within human competency to pronounce that any such forfeiture hath actually been incurred, unless the assailants are certified thereof by a revelation from heaven. A very different doctrine, he allowed, was held by the supreme Pontiff and his adherents, who have frequently given their sanction to religious wars⁸ : but it was always to be kept in mind, that St. Peter himself was liable to error ; and it might, therefore, fairly be surmised, that the same infirmity had descended to his successors : and he infers, from the whole matter, that all hostilities undertaken without a special injunction from the God of battles, are, under the Christian dispensation, as indefensible as they were under the Jewish theocracy. Wars of self-defence fare little better in his judgment, than wars of conquest or aggression. Fiends, he tells us, have been withheld by angels, and righteous men have often overcome the wicked : but in neither instance has the cause been committed to

⁸ "Such wars," says Fuller, "increased the *intrado* of the Pope's revenues. Some say purgatory fire heateth his kitchen : they may add, the holy war filled his pot, if not paid for all his second course."—*Holy War*, b. v. c. 12.

the arbitrement of force. Sometimes the law of the land will enable us to resist our adversaries ; and, at all times, men of the Gospel, by the spirit of patience and of peace, have been, and ever may be, conquerors through the suffering of death. How the quarrels of nations are to be settled upon these principles, he does not proceed to instruct us. Possibly he might be withheld by the conviction, that it would be to little purpose to enlarge further upon a doctrine, which, as he confesses, he well knew would be received with general scorn. Contemptible as it was, however, he avers that men, who would be martyrs for the law of God, would hold thereby : and he sarcastically adds, that the knight who derives his honours from the slaughter of his fellow-creatures, is frequently outdone by the hangman, who killeth many more, and with a better title⁹.

Whatever may be the crudity of some of these positions, it is obvious that he who insisted on them, would be prepared to give no quarter to the follies of this Papal crusade. He accordingly returns, repeatedly, to the charge against it. A fighting priest he describes as no better than a fiend, stained foul with homicide. The friars, indeed, may say that bishops can fight best of all men, and that the work becomes them nobly, since they are lords of the whole world. Thus, they tell us, did Maccabeus fight ; and Christ bade his disciples sell their coats, and buy them swords ; but whereto, if not to fight ? But Christ, he replies, taught not his Apostles to fight with swords

⁹ MS. Hom. Bib. Reg. 18. b. ix. p. 109, cited by Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 211.

of iron, but with the sword of God's word, which standeth in meekness of heart, and in prudence of tongue: and the two Popes would do well to give heed to these truths, when they fight with each other, with the most blasphemous leasings that ever issued out of hell¹.

That Wiclit was aware of the danger attendant on all this freedom of speech, seems clear from various

He conceives his life to be in danger from his enemies.

passages of his writings, and, more especially, of his Trialogus, which was produced after his banishment from Oxford, and in which it is plainly intimated that a multitude of the friars, and of others who were called Christians, were then compassing his death by every variety of machination². That he had counted the cost of his warfare, is further evident from the language in which he contends for the necessity of constant preparation for martyrdom. "It is a satanical excuse," he says, in the same treatise, "made by modern hypocrites, that it is not necessary now to suffer martyrdom, as it was in the primitive Church, because now all, or the greatest part of living men, are believers, and there are no tyrants who put Christians to death. This excuse is suggested by the devil: for, if the faithful would now stand firm for the law of Christ, and, as his soldiers, endure bravely any sufferings, they might tell the Pope, the cardinals, the bishops, and other prelates,

¹ From the MS. of Dr. James in the Bodleian, cited by Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 212, 213.

² Trialogus, lib. iv. c. 4. 17. 39. See Lewis, c. vii. p. 125. Turner's Hist. of Eng., pt. iv. p. 424.

how, departing from the faith of the Gospel, they minister unfitly to God, and what perilous injury they commit against his people." And he adds, "Instead of visiting pagans, to convert them by martyrdom, let us preach constantly the law of Christ to princely prelates: martyrdom will then meet us speedily enough, if we persevere in faith and patience³." We have seen, however, that in the midst of all his dangers, there were various causes which combined to divert the malice of his adversaries. The times were full of confusion. England was convulsed by contending factions. The antagonist Pontiffs were still engaged in anathematizing each other. And then, although the Duke of Lancaster withdrew his open support from the Reformer, when once he committed himself to the sacramental contest, it was very doubtful whether he would endure the sacrifice of his time-honoured friend. Besides, it was evident that the days of Wiclit were drawing to an end: and the result of all these circumstances was, that the man who had long made the kingdom echo with his testimony against the corruptions of the Church, was, nevertheless, doomed to close his labours by a peaceful death⁴. After his settlement at Lutterworth, his infirmities compelled him to ease the burden of his parochial duties, by the assistance of a curate. To the last, however, he did not wholly discontinue his personal ministrations; and it was his happiness to finish his

³ *Trialogus*, cited by Turner, pt. iv. p. 424.

⁴ "Admirable," says Fuller, "that a hare so often hunted, with so many packs of dogs, should die, at last, quietly sitting in his form."—*Church Hist.* p. 142.

course in the public execution of his holy office. On the 29th of December, 1384, he was mortally seized with paralysis, in his church, during the celebration of mass, and just about the time of the elevation of the sacrament. The attack was so severe as to deprive him of speech, and to render him utterly helpless. In this condition he lingered two days ; and was finally taken to his rest, on ^{1384.} the last day of the year, and in the ^{Death of Wiclit.} sixty-first year of his age.

Thus prematurely was terminated ^{Character of} Wiclit. the career of this extraordinary man. His days were not extended to the length usually allotted to our species. Ten more years of vigorous exertion might reasonably have been expected from the virtuous and temperate habits of an exemplary life. But the earthly tenement was, probably, worn out by the intense and fervid energy of the spirit within : and if his mortal existence be measured by the amount of his labours and achievements, he must appear to us as full of days as he was of honours. It now remains that we endeavour to form a righteous estimate of him, as he presents himself to our conceptions through the haze and mist of ages. Unfortunately, he is known to us almost entirely by his writings. Over all those minute and personal peculiarities which give to any individual his distinct expression and physiognomy, time has drawn an impenetrable veil. To us he appears, for the most part, as a sort of unembodied agency. To delineate his *character*, in the fullest and most interesting sense of that word, would be to write romance, and

not biography. During a portion of his life, indeed, he is more or less mixed up with public interests and transactions: but of these matters our notices are but poor and scanty; and, if they were more copious, they would probably do little towards supplying us with those nameless particulars to which biography owes its most powerful charm. With regard to the details of his daily life—the habitual complexion of his temper—the turn of his conversation—the manner of his deportment among his companions—his inclinations or antipathies—his friendships or his alienations—we must be content to remain in hopeless ignorance. The only circumstance recorded concerning him, that falls within the description of an *anecdote*, is the reply with which he confounded the meddling and insidious Friars, who intruded themselves upon him when they thought he was about to breathe his last. This incident is, indeed, abundantly characteristic; and it makes us regret that it stands alone. A few more such particulars would have been invaluable. As it is, we must be satisfied to think of him as of a voice crying in the wilderness, and lifting up, through a long course of years, a loud and incessant testimony against abuses which for ages had wearied the long-suffering of heaven. He stands before us in a sort of mysterious loneliness. To group him, if we so may speak, with other living men, would require a very strong effort of the imagination. And hence it is that we meditate on his story with emotions of solemn interest, but without any turbulent agitation of our sympathies.

In this penury of information, tradition steps in, as it were to "help us with a little help." Various stories, it would appear, are current to this day in the town of Lutterworth, respecting its ancient and renowned rector. But the only one among them that appears worthy of attention, is that which represents him as admirable in all the functions of a parochial minister⁵. A portion of each morning, it is said, was regularly devoted to the relief of the necessitous, to the consolation of the afflicted, and to the discharge of every pious office, by the bed of sickness and of death. Every thing which is actually known respecting Wiclf combines to render this account entirely credible. The duties of the Christian ministry form the incessant burden of a considerable portion of his writings. To the faithfulness and assiduity with which he discharged one very essential portion of those duties, the extant manuscripts of his parochial discourses bear ample and honourable testimony. There is nothing, therefore, which can tempt us to question the report which describes him as exemplary in every department of his sacred stewardship. "Good priests," he himself tells us, "who live well, in purity of thought, and speech, and deed, and in good example to the people, who teach the law of God, up to their knowledge, and labour fast, day and night, to learn it better, and teach it openly and constantly, these are very

⁵ The manner in which the duties of a parochial minister were discharged by Wiclf, has suggested to Lewis the conjecture that he may have been the original of Chaucer's celebrated picture of the Village Priest. Lewis, p. 45.

prophets of God, and holy angels of God, and the spiritual lights of the world ! Thus saith God, by his prophets, and Jesus Christ in his Gospel ; and saints declare it well by authority and reason. Think, then, ye priests, on this noble office, and honour it, and do it cheerfully according to your knowledge and your power⁶ ! " It is surely pleasing to believe that the people of Lutterworth had before their eyes the living and breathing form of that holy benevolence which is here portrayed with so much admirable simplicity and beauty.

His preferments not inconsistent with his notions respecting clerical possessions. The preceding narrative has already made us acquainted with the notions entertained by Wiclif relative to the endowments of the Church, and the revenues of individual clergymen. And it may, perhaps, be thought somewhat remarkable that any one who maintained such principles should nevertheless have held, without apparent scruple, a chair of theology at Oxford, a prebendal stall, and a parochial rectory. Of the value of these preferments we are in no condition to form any satisfactory estimate. They must, however, in all probability, have been considerable ; at any rate, they must have been far beyond the measure of what was needful to supply the moderate necessities of life, at a period when the sacred office doomed its professors to celibacy ; and, therefore, far beyond that which his system would seem to allot, as the legitimate provision of a Christian minister. The truth is, that Wiclif seems to have

⁶ MS. For the order of priesthood, cited by Vaughan, vol. ii. p 259.

regarded all the endowments of the Church as a manifest departure from the original spirit of the Christian system. Had he been allowed to remodel our ecclesiastical polity, he would, probably, have made the clergy dependent on the voluntary offerings of the people. However, he found a different scheme actually established ; and he, probably, conceived himself at liberty to conform to it, provided the funds entrusted to his stewardship were administered by him according to the intention of the original donor. This intention he understood to be, that the holder of those funds should retain for his own use so much as might be required for his own support, upon a frugal and moderate scale ; but that, for every thing beyond his own personal wants, he should stand in the place of perpetual almoner to the founder, and perpetual trustee for the poor. Now there appears no reasonable cause to question that Wiclif acted faithfully up to this principle. His adversaries have never breathed a syllable to the disparagement of his integrity in this particular. He has never, that I am aware, been charged, by those who most cordially hated him, with inconsistency, for accepting or retaining his preferments, or with avarice and selfishness in the disposal of his emoluments. And when we combine this consideration with the traditional accounts of him, which still survive at Lutterworth, the fair inference is, that he did, actually, regard all his superfluities as strictly consecrated to the relief of indigence.

The private life and personal habits of Wiclif seem to have been always Wiclif not a political agitator. above impeachment or suspicion : but

then, he has been pictured to us by some, rather under the aspect of an unquiet agitator, than a devout and spiritual man ; as fitted to join with princes and politicians in their resistance to encroachment, rather than to band with saints and confessors in bearing testimony to the truth. And yet it would be difficult to discover any reasonable ground for this charge. The whole substance of the case appears to be this : that an English ecclesiastic of distinguished sagacity and erudition was publicly employed, on one or two occasions, to defend the Church and State of England against the rapacity of aliens ; and this, too, in an age when the talents and accomplishments of churchmen were constantly in requisition for all the most arduous responsibilities of secular office. If, indeed, it could be shown that the days and nights of Wiclit were chiefly consumed in worldly and political occupations, and that his powers were thus diverted from the channel in which the main current of a churchman's exertions ought to flow, there might be fair grounds for such an exhibition of his character. But, in fact, the occurrences in question were nothing more than short episodes in his life. We have only to look into his writings, or even into a catalogue of his writings, to see how small a portion of his time can have been absorbed by matters in which secular politics had the slightest concern ; and how erroneous is the suggestion that Wiclit became conspicuous *merely* as an antagonist, on behalf of the State, against the Papacy.

His unwearied energy. If any one were required to point out the distinguishing attribute of Wic-

lif's mind, he might, with justice, fix upon its inexhaustible and unwearying energy. He was not one of those small combatants, who soon speed their puny shafts, and, when their quiver is once emptied, sit down contented, and think their *warfare is accomplished*. For a long series of years his bolts followed each other, so thick and fast, that his enemies, who affirmed that he was an emissary of Satan, might have been almost justified in adding that his name was *Legion*. It has been conjectured that, if all his works could be brought together, they would form a collection nearly equal in bulk to the writings of St. Augustine. His attainments were eminent for the age in which he lived. He was acknowledged as a mighty clerk, even by Archbishop Arundel⁷; and we have already seen that his skill in the scholastic discipline was allowed to be incomparable. This last accomplishment, it has frequently been observed, was of signal service to the cause to which he dedicated himself. It is justly remarked, by Mr. Turner, in speaking of his *Trialogus*, that "its attractive merit was, that it combined the new opinions with the scholastic style of thinking and deduction. It was not the ^{probable effect of} ^{scholastic discipline on his} mere illiterate Reformer, teaching ^{mind.} novelties, whom the man of education disdained and derided: it was the respected academician, reasoning with the ideas of the Reformer⁸. If estimated, however, purely by its effect upon the powers of his own mind, the Genius of the Schools was but a

⁷ Thorp's Examination.

⁸ Turner, Hist. England, pt. iv. p. 420.

very questionable ally. It was frequently a source of weakness rather than of strength. It seems, whenever he called it to his aid, to have exercised a sinister and treacherous influence upon all his faculties, and often to have forced them aside from their simplicity and rectitude. When he is addressing untutored minds, he usually drives his ploughshare right onward; but no sooner does he yoke this capricious drudge with his own sturdy oxen, than all manner of unsteadiness and obliquity seems to be the consequence. This we have seen remarkably exemplified in his two confessions, relative to the Eucharist. The English one is, on the whole, simple and perspicuous enough: the other, which is in Latin, and composed with a view to more accomplished judges, runs out into all the mazes and intricacies of the favourite mode of reasoning; and the result is, that it has given his adversaries occasion to charge him with disingenuous artifice, and to affirm, that his object was to envelop himself in darkness, and so to effect his escape.

Alleged coarse-
ness of his invec-
tives. Complaints are sometimes heard of the unmannerly virulence with which

he arraigned the iniquities of the time.

There is nothing to be said in vindication of such intemperance. In the way of palliation, however, it should be recollected that refinement was not among the characteristics of the fourteenth century. The language of Wiclit's Romish adversaries would alone be sufficient to show this; for he can bear no comparison with them in the command of these implements of controversial war-

fare⁹. Even if we advance from the fourteenth century to the sixteenth, we shall, unhappily, perceive, that urbanity and mildness had found but little favour among those who were engaged in theological or literary conflict. Wiclif might, really, have gone to school to Martin Luther and John Calvin, had he lived in their days, and had he been desirous to perfect himself in the accomplishment of railing. It is humiliating, indeed, to think, that this species of firebrand should ever be madly tossed about by men, who appeared as ministers and champions of a religion, which speaks incessantly of benevolence and of courtesy. But, in estimating the blame of such excesses, it is unfair to disregard the complexion of the age, which will usually be exhibited more vividly, in proportion to the vehement sincerity of its leading men.

There seems to be no doubt that, Prevalence of Wiclif's opinions at Oxford, after his death. after the death of Wiclif, his opinions continued to prevail in the University of Oxford, to an extent which excited the indignation of the Ecclesiastical authorities, and that his memory was cherished there with feelings of profound veneration. The prevalence of his doctrines is attested by the reiterated complaints of Archbishop Arundel, who affirms that Oxford was as a vine that brought forth wild and sour grapes, which being eaten by the fathers, the teeth of the children were set on edge; so that the whole province of Canterbury was tainted with novel and damnable

⁹ For instance, see the language of Walsingham, *ante*, p. 257, note 1.

Lollardism, to the intolerable and notorious scandal of the University¹. Again :—“ She who was formerly the mother of virtues, the prop of the Catholic faith, the singular pattern of obedience, now brings forth only abortive or degenerate children, who encourage contumacy and rebellion, and sow tares among the pure

The testimonial of the University, in honour of his memory, in 1406. wheat².” Their reverence for the name and labours of Wiclif is indicated by a solemn testimonial to his worth, which

is said to have been given by the University, in the year

Question of its authenticity considered. 1406, and sealed with their common seal. It is true that considerable sus-

picion hangs over the authenticity of

this document. The precise occasion on which it was drawn up and executed, is unknown; and, besides, it has been gravely affirmed, “ that one Peter Payne, a heretic, stole the University seal, under which he wrote to the heretics at Prague, in Bohemia, that Oxford, and all England, were of the same belief with those of Prague, except the false Friars Mendicant.” There is something in this story not very probable: for, as Lewis observes, it is not lightly to be credited that the seal of the University should be so carelessly guarded, as to render practicable so impudent an imposture. A somewhat more plausible supposition is, that the friends and admirers of Wiclif may have seized upon the advantage afforded them, by the absence of his enemies, during the vacation, and may have assembled for the purpose of honouring the memory of the Reformer by the above Certificate.

¹ Wilk. Conc. vol. iii. p. 318.

² Lewis, c. x. p. 235.

And this conjecture receives some slight support from a statute afterwards made, providing, that the seal of the University shall not be fixed to any writing, but in full congregation of Regents, if in full term ; or in full convocation of Regents and non-Regents, if in vacation ; and that nothing shall be sealed till after one day's full deliberation. Nothing can be more likely, than that this statute may have been framed to obviate practices similar to those by which this testimonial is supposed to have been obtained : but, yet, when it is recollected that this enactment did not take place till 1426, twenty years after the passing of the document in question, it will not appear eminently probable that this was the fraud by which the statute was occasioned. It should further be remembered that, although, according to some accounts, this testimonial was stigmatized as a forgery by certain Englishmen at the Council of Constance, yet there was no act produced, on the part of the University, disclaiming its authenticity³. But whether the paper be authentic or not, it may still be relied on as evidence of the estimation in which the character of Wiclif was still held at Oxford ; for the preparation of such an instrument would never have entered the head of the most unscrupulous of his admirers, if it were not perfectly notorious that his memory was deeply honoured by a very large portion of the members of the University : and for this reason the Testimonial is here inserted at length⁴.

³ See Lewis, c. x. p. 228—236, where the authenticity of this testimonial is amply discussed.

⁴ The original Latin is printed in Wilk. Conc. vol. iii. p. 302, from the Cotton MS. Faust. c. 7.

" The publike Testimonie given out by the Universitie of Oxford, touching the Commendation of the great Learning and good Life of John Wickliffe.

" Unto all and singuler the children of our holy mother the church, to whom this present letter shall come ; the vicechancellor of the Universitie of Oxford, with the whole congregation of the masters, wish perpetual health in the Lord. Forsomuch as it is not commonly seene, that the acts and monuments of valiant men, nor the praise and merits of good men should be passed over and hidden with perpetuall silence, but that true report and fame should continually spread abrode the same in strange and farre distant places, both for the witnesse of the same, and example of others : Forasmuch also as the provident discretion of mans nature being recompensed with cruelty, hath devised and ordained this buckler and defence, against such as doe blasphemē and slander other mens doings, that whensoever witnesse by word of mouth cannot be present, the pen by writing may supply the same :

" Hereupon it followeth, that the special good will and care which we bare unto John Wickliffe, sometime child of this our Universitie, and professour of divinitie, moving and stirring our minds (as his manners and conditions required no lesse) with one mind, voice, and testimonie, wee doe witnesse, all his conditions and doings throughout his whole life, to have been most sincere and commendable : whose honest manners and conditions, profoundnesse of learning, and most redolent renoune and fame, wee desire the more earnestly to bee notified and knowne unto all

faithfull, for that we understand the maturitie and ripenesse of his conversation, his diligent labours and travels to tend to the praise of God, the helpe and safegard of others, and the profit of the church.

“ Wherefore we signfie unto you by these presents, that his conversation (even from his youth upwards, unto the time of his death) was so praise-worthie and honest, that never at any time was there any note or spot of suspicion noysed of him. But in his answering, reading, preaching and determining, he behaved himselfe laudably, and as a stout and valiant champion of the faith ; vanquishing by the force of the Scriptures, all such who by their wilful beggery blasphemed and slandered Christs religion. Neither was this said doctor convict of any heresie, either burned of our prelats after his buriall. God forbid that our prelats should have condemned a man of such honestie, for an heretike : who amongst all the rest of the Universitie, had written in logicke, philosophie, divinitie, moralitie, and the speculative art without peere. The knowledge of which all and singuler things, wee doe desire to testifie and deliver forth ; to the intent, that the fame and renoune of this said doctor, may be the more evident and had in reputation, amongst them, unto whose hands these present letters testimoniall shall come.

“ In witnes wherof, we have caused these our letters testimoniall to bee sealed with our common seale. Dated at Oxford in our congregation house, the 5. day of October, in the yeare of our Lord, 1406.”

Next to the admiration of those who are friendly to his cause and memory, the most forcible certificate in favour of Wiclid is to be found in the virulent abuse

heaped upon his name by his adversaries. Among the various extant testimonials of this description, we may select that of the chronicler, Walsingham. We have seen, above, the titles which Wiclif earned from the pen of that writer, by the labours of his life. The following is the language in which the same historian exults over his death :—“On the day of St. Thomas the Martyr, Archbishop of Canterbury, that organ of the Devil, that enemy of the Church, that confusion of the populace, that idol of heretics, that mirror of hypocrites, that instigator of schism, that sower of hatred, that fabricator of lies, John Wiclif,—when, on the same day, *as it is reported*, he would have vomited forth the blasphemies, which he had prepared in his sermon, against St. Thomas,—being suddenly struck by the judgment of God, felt all his limbs invaded by the palsy. That mouth, which had spoken monstrous things against God and his Saints, or the holy Church, was then miserably distorted, exhibiting a frightful spectacle to the beholders. His tongue, now speechless, denied him even the power of confessing. His head shook, and thus plainly shewed that the curse which God had thundered forth against Cain, was now fallen upon him. And, that none might doubt of his being consigned to the company of Cain, he shewed by manifest outward signs, that he died in despair⁵. ” Again, “After he had been smitten with the palsy, he dragged out his hated life until St. Silvester’s day. On which day he breathed out his malicious spirit

⁵ Walsingh. p. 338.

to the abodes of darkness. And, in truth, most justly was he stricken on the day of St. Thomas, whom his envenomed tongue had often blasphemed ; and was doomed, with temporal death, on the day of St. Silvester, whom he had exasperated with his incessant invectives⁶." It would be idle to waste a word of censure upon this stupid jargon. It is utterly undeserving of notice, otherwise than as affording a curious indication of the spirit of the times, and a strong testimony to the formidable nature of Wiclit's aggressions on the predominant superstitions.

The hatred of Wiclit's enemies was quite as long-lived and as active as the admiration of his adherents. It not only persecuted his memory, but forbade his remains to rest in peace. This pitiful exhibition of malignity was occasioned by the wide dispersion of the English Reformer's opinions in many parts of the continent, but more especially in Bohemia. The queen of Richard the Second was a Bohemian princess ; and, on her decease, her attendants are supposed to have carried back with them into their own country some considerable portions of Wiclit's compositions, and thus to have been greatly instrumental in the dissemination of his doctrines. The soil was, at that time, well prepared for the reception of the seed ; and the effect of his writings there was even more striking and rapid than that which they produced in his own country. It is said that full two hundred of his books were burnt by Subinco Lepus, bishop of

Prevalence of
Wiclit's opinions
in Bohemia.

⁶ Wala. Ypod. Neustr.

Prague. The number may, at first sight, appear surprising: but it must be recollected, that Wiclit generally sent forth his notions into the world in small detachments. He, doubtless, perceived, that the frequent appearance of little tracts would much facilitate the dissemination of his tenets,—an object which, before the invention of printing, would be most injuriously retarded by the publication of more bulky volumes. The estimation in which these treatises were held in Bohemia, is illustrated by the fact, that many of those which were burnt by Subinco were very finely written, and decorated with splendid bindings, and costly embossments of gold. It is still more conspicuously manifested, in the open commendation with which they were honoured by John Huss and Jerome of Prague; and in the consequent

His writings condemned, and his remains disinterred, by a Decree of the Council of Constance. reprobation of them by the Council of Constance. In 1415, full thirty years after the death of Wiclit, a long list of intolerable propositions was selected by that assembly from his writings, and branded with the mark of heresy. The memory of the writer was, at the same time, consigned, in due form, to infamy and execration; and an order was issued, that “his body and bones, if they might be discerned and known from the bodies of other faithful people, should be taken from the ground, and thrown away from the burial of any church, according to the canon laws, and decrees.” The grave was, accordingly, ransacked; though not till thirteen years after the order was pronounced. The remains of Wiclit were disinterred, and the ashes cast into an adjoining brook

called the Swift. And, the person chosen for the execution of the decree, was Richard Fleming ; once a zealous adherent of the Reformer, but, then, bishop of Lincoln, and an unsparing persecutor of the opinions which he formerly professed.

CHAPTER IX.

WICLIF'S OPINIONS.

Wyclif charged by some with Pelagianism, by others, more justly, with the doctrine of Predestination—His Predestinarian notions chiefly confined to his Scholastic Writings—Pilgrimage and Image-worship—Purgatory—Auricular Confession and Papal Indulgences—Excommunication and Papal Interdicts—Papal power and supremacy—Episcopacy—Priests—The Church—Church visible and invisible—The Sacraments—Baptism—Confirmation—Penance—Ordination—Matrimony—The Eucharist—Extreme Unction—Celibacy of the Clergy—Fasting—Ceremonies—Church Music—Charms and Judicial Astrology—Notions imputed to Wyclif that God must obey the Devil, and that every creature is God—Dominion founded on Grace, how understood and explained by Wyclif—Wyclif's opinions as to the power of the State over Church property—Wyclif considers Church Endowments as inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity—Tithes represented by him as Alms—Wyclif's services, as preparatory to the Reformation—Notion of the Reformation, as it would probably have been effected by him—The belief prevalent in his time that Satan was loosed—Its probable influence on his views and opinions.

THE general tenour of Wyclif's theological opinions might probably be collected with tolerable clearness from the foregoing narration of his life. Nevertheless, our account of him might be deemed imperfect, if not followed up by something of a more systematic exhibition of his peculiar principles; so far, at least, as they have hitherto been ascertained.

For the time, perhaps, is yet to come, when it will be possible to pronounce with entire confidence, to what extent his notions were truly primitive and catholic ; or to form a sober and correct estimate of the value of his labours for the reformation of the Church.

In the first place, then, it is somewhat remarkable that,—reformer as he was,—in one important particular his views have been pronounced defective by a leader of the great Reformation of the sixteenth century. His theology has been censured by Melanchthon, and, after him, by certain other Protestant divines, as tinctured by Pelagianism ; and, as containing no recognition of the grand doctrine of justification by faith. From the mouth of a distinguished adherent of Luther, this objection will occasion but little surprise, whatever other feelings it may excite. For, the doctrine in question was the key which seemed to open the gates of paradise to the mighty Reformer himself ; and, till he had seized upon it, the kingdom of heaven appeared to him surrounded with a wall of adamant. With him, therefore, and with his followers, it became their one great *fixed idea* ; in the power and virtue of which they were to go forth against all the errors and corruptions of the age. They held it to be the test of a standing or a falling Church : and, if rigorously tried by this test, Wiclid may, perhaps, appear scarcely worthy to be the herald and forerunner of *their* Reformation. But though it may be difficult to point out in his writings any thing which amounts to a precise dogmatical inculcation of this truth, in the very terms in which it was subsequently expressed, there can be no reasonable doubt that the life and power of the doctrine

pervaded the theology of Wiclid. For instance, he tells us expressly, that the merit of Christ is sufficient to redeem mankind from hell, and this without the concurrence of any other cause; that faith in him is sufficient for salvation; that they who truly follow him are justified by his justice, and made righteous by participation in his righteousness; and that infidels are not to be accounted as living virtuously, even though they should do such works as, in their kind, are good¹. Conformable to these declarations is the whole tenour of his doctrine. The merits of his Saviour evidently form the central object of his meditations. And if there occasionally drop from him any allusion to human desert, it is obviously introduced, not in disparagement of the sovereign merits of Christ, but of the vicarious good offices either of priests or saints; not to weaken our dependence on our Redeemer, but to strengthen our conviction that, in the presence of his Judge, each man must stand or fall by his own *personal* doings, not by those of his confessor, or of his mass-priest, or of any other spiritual agent. That he rejected all Pharisaic and Pelagian confidence in human *mérit*, is clear and undeniable. "Heal us, Lord," he exclaims, "for nought; not for our merits, but for thy mercy.—Lord, not to our merits, but to thy mercy, give the joy.—Give us grace to know that all thy gifts be of thy goodness.—Our flesh, though it may seem holy, yet it is not holy.—We are all originally sinners, not only *from* our mother's womb, but *in* our mother's womb. We cannot so much as think a good thought,

¹ James's Apology for Wiclid, c. v.

unless Jesu, the angel of great counsel, send it ; nor perform a good work, unless it be properly his good work.—His mercy comes before us, that we receive grace, and followeth us, helping and keeping us in grace².” And yet with passages like these scattered over his works, Wiclif has been deemed a worthy associate of Pelagius, and has been charged with suppressing or denying the grace of God, and of teaching his followers to put their sole trust in human virtue and deserving³!

As an antagonist charge to that of Pelagianism, we find him accused by others of maintaining that all things come to pass by absolute necessity ; a doctrine which, in its fullest latitude, annihilates not only human merit, but human responsibility. That a schoolman should resist the temptation to meddle with this untractable question, was scarcely to be expected. That, like all other mortals who have ever approached it, he should be defeated and baffled, was a necessary result of the attempt. It does not appear, however, that he has advanced any thing upon this subject which should fix upon him the imputation of unqualified fatalism. He confesses, indeed, in his *Trialogus*,

² James's *Apology*, c. vi. The last of the above-cited passages, turned into a prayer, gives us, precisely, one of our own Collects : “ Lord, we pray thee that thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Collect for the 17th Sunday after Trinity. See also Lewis, c. viii. p. 174, 175.

³ See the quotations from *Walden*, in James's *Apology*, c. vi.

that he had ascribed every event to absolute necessity ; not being able to conceive that there should be any effective impediment to the Divine will ; but then he, likewise, professes to modify this proposition by the needful caution, that, since we are ignorant of the purposes of God, future occurrences must present themselves to our understanding as so many possibilities, and that all his promises and threatenings must be received by us as under a condition either tacit or express⁴. And thus his views are found to be in unison with those of the soundest thinkers of our own times, whose sentiments may be summed up in the language of Dr. Hey⁵: “Disputes on liberty and necessity are vain and idle ; as much so as if you were placed within a spherical surface, and I without it, and we were to enter into abstruse arguments on the question, whether the surface between us were concave or convex. In my situation it is convex, in yours it is concave.” If we consider events with reference to the Divine mind, it seems utterly impossible to think of them as otherwise than fixed : if we consider them with reference to responsible agents, it seems as impossible to regard them as otherwise than contingent. This was perceived by Wiclif ; and he likewise appears to have been aware of the vanity of all attempts to reconcile, by any mere logical process, conditional decrees, with *absolute* fore-knowledge, perfect independence, and unlimited sovereignty⁶.

⁴ This, if I comprehend it rightly, is the substance of the passage cited by Lewis, (c. viii. p. 178,) though the language is sufficiently obscure. See also James's *Apology*, c. ix.

⁵ Lect. vol. iii. p. 248.

⁶ See Lewis, p. 178.

In his application of the doctrine of necessity to theological subjects, Wiclit is sparing and cautious. In his *Trialogus*, indeed, he says that “we are predestinated to obtain divine acceptance, and to become holy ;” and professes it to be his opinion, that “this grace of predestination can by no means fail.” But, whatever may have been the rigour with which he held this theory, the subject is but rarely introduced into his practical discourses. The *Trialogus*, it must be remembered, was one of his more abstruse and scholastic lucubrations : and so long as the pre-destinarian question is confined to the Schools, its sinister influence will be comparatively trifling. In his popular and pastoral compositions, the allusions to it are but slight and transient ; so that, it may be hoped, he had not wrought himself into persuasion, that such speculations formed an indispensable ingredient in a scheme of sound religious belief.

On the subject of images and pilgrimages, and invocation of saints, he is, perhaps, less copious than might be expected. That the *use* of images (considered merely as the *books* of ignorant and unlearned laymen) was not forbidden, he distinctly concedes ; and he likens them to the wedding ring, which is cherished by the wife as the symbol of her attachment and fidelity to her husband⁷. But though he considers the practice as lawful, it is quite evident that he does not regard it as safe. He conceives that the venom of idolatry lurks within it ; and affirms that Papists,

His predestinarian notions chiefly confined to his scholastic writings.

in effect, assimilate themselves to Pagans, when they attempt to repel the charge of idolatry, by the shallow pretext, that their devotions terminate not in the figure, but in that which it represents^a. He, moreover, affirms, that when the dumb idol is honoured with costly offerings, and with such adoration as is due to God alone, it may lawfully be broken or burnt by Christian kings, with the assent of their lords and clergy, even as the brazen serpent was broken in pieces by Hezekiah, when the children of Israel began to offer incense to it. His perception of the vanity of all applications to men deceased, appears to have gained strength with his advance in life: for in one of his latest works, he censures it as folly to seek for any intercession but that of Jesus Christ: and, though he so far conformed to the usage of the Church, as to keep the festivals of the saints; yet he scruples not to intimate that it might be as well, if they were altogether abolished, so that men might celebrate the festival of Jesus Christ alone, and the devotion of the people might cease to be parcelled out among his members. And he concludes, that the multitude of canonizations may reasonably be ascribed to the decay of faith, and the growth of covetousness^b. In the early part of his life, indeed, his opinions on this subject may, possibly, have been less decided. But, that he retained any erroneous impressions respecting it, at the close of his days, seems negatived by the clamours of his enemies, who

^a James's Apol. c. viii. s. 6. *Apology for the Lollard Doctrines*, p. 85, ed. Todd. 1842.

^b *Trialogus*, c. iii. p. 30, 31.

speak of him as actually raving against the saints, and as visited with a frightful death for this, among his other manifold impieties¹.

His notions relative to purgatory would seem, on the whole, to have been, in like manner, progressive; though it cannot be affirmed that they ever advanced so far as to the total abandonment of that fiction. In one of his earlier writings, he expressly acknowledges, on the authority of St. Augustine, that souls in purgatory are helped and comforted by the alms and religious exercises of good men². And in a subsequent treatise he allows, that saying of mass, with burning devotion, and holiness and integrity of life, is well pleasing to God, and profitable to Christian souls in purgatory³. In another place he treats all the fearful sayings concerning purgatory, as things spoken by way of commination, and, as it were, so many pious falsehoods. He divides the Church into three portions, the militant, the reposing, and the triumphant; and speaks of the Sabbath as prefiguring the *rest* of those who *sleep* in purgatory⁴. From which it would appear that, in his opinion, all that could be done by

¹ James's Apology, c. viii. s. 24, 25. Wals. p. 338.

² MSS. Cotton. Titus. D. xix. 129, cited by Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 288.

³ Sentence of curse expounded, c. vii. cited in Lewis, c. viii. p. 161.

⁴ *Omnia dicta de purgatorio, dicuntur solummodo comminatoriè, tanquam pia mendacia.* De Verit. Scripturæ, p. 267. *Sabbathum prefigurat quietem dormientium in purgatorio.* Ibid. p. 479. See James's Apol. c. viii. s. 24, 25. Trialogus, lib. iv. c. 22.

the prayers of the faithful would be to improve, in some indefinite manner, the condition of departed souls, in their intermediate state. All this, it must be allowed, is indistinct and unsatisfactory enough: but, vague as it is, it strikes directly at the root of the Romish doctrine and practice, which proved so vast a source of emolument to the Church. As Dr. James remarks, “it thrusts the Popish purgatory clean out of doors: for there is little rest, and less sleeping there, if we believe them who have come from thence. And, by this reason, if the fire of purgatory be clean put out, the smoke of it,—that is, prayers for the dead,—must needs, in a very short time, vanish away⁵. ” It should further be recollected, that, whatever might be the efficacy of prayers for the deceased, that efficacy is repeatedly ascribed by him, to the devotions of the laity as well as those of the priesthood; nay, that, in his judgment, the prayer of the pious layman was, without measure, more avail- ing than that of a worthless and reprobate prelate⁶. On the whole matter, therefore, it may reasonably be concluded, that, relative to the precise condition of the dead, his mind remained, to the very last, in a state of indecision; but that he never ceased to stigmatize the system which converted the doctrine of purgatory into an engine for extorting revenue from the popular credulity and terror. He loudly accuses the clergy of “ inventing pains, horrible and shameful, to make men pay a vast ransom; ” and describes

⁵ James's Apol. c. viii. 24, 25.

⁶ Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 289, 290..

" all masses for which money is taken, as an artifice of Satan, and a contrivance of hypocrisy and avarice ?."

With regard to Auricular Confession, and Papal Indulgences, the trumpet of ^{Auricular Confession and Papal Indulgences.} Wiclid gives utterance to nothing like

an uncertain sound. He proclaims to the world, not in the learned dialect of the Schools, but in plain and homely English, that pardons and indulgences are mere forgeries, whereby the priesthood " rob men curiously of their money ; that they are nothing but a subtle merchandise of Anti-Christ's clerks, whereby they magnify their own fictitious power, and, instead of causing men to dread sin, encourage them to wallow therein like hogs." And, as for the pretext, that the payment was not demanded as the price of the pardon itself, but simply as a gratuity or fee for the instrument by which it was formally conveyed, he sarcastically exclaims, " Certes, then, a little dead lead ⁸ doth cost many a thousand pound by the year, to this poor land !" and he adds, that the mockery is no less impudent than it would be to offer a fatted goose for nothing, but to charge a good round sum for the garlic with which it was to be seasoned ⁹ ! To us the exposure of these impostures may seem but a light and unimportant matter. But, again, let it be considered, what it was for an individual to rise up, and to speak thus to a whole nation, in an age when the posses-

⁷ On Prelates, c. iii. cited in Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 289.

⁸ The seal affixed to the Papal Bulls was of lead.

⁹ See Lewis, c. viii. p. 168—171. Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 297—304. Apology for Lollard Doctrines, p. 7, &c. ed. Todd, 1842.

sions of men in this world, and their destinies in the world to come, were held to be at the disposal of an infallible and irresistible representative of God upon earth !

Excommunicatio-
nation, and Papal
Interdicts. The power of the keys, it is well known,

the Romish, but by the Eastern Church, as the very axis on which alone the ecclesiastical system can revolve with regularity and steadiness ; and without which no Christian society can deserve even the name of a Church. The manner in which this authority was sometimes prostituted to the darkest passions, is indelibly written in the history of Christian Europe. At this day we may smile, perhaps, at the thunders of the Romish Church : but, in the days of Wiclit, they had power to “make mad the guilty, and appal the free.” Yet, our countryman was bold enough to defy them : and this in the hearing of the whole realm of England, then one of the fairest portions of the Pontifical domain. Why, he exclaims, in one of his English treatises, do our wayward curates curse the souls of men to hell, and their bodies to prison, and doom them to forfeiture of goods, and loss of life, and all for the sake of paltry gain ? and this, too, while they themselves are accursed of God, for entering on their office by simony, and betraying it by abandonment of duty, and unholiness of living ! The pains of hell, rather than tithes and offerings, are their proper recompense. They are rather malicious tormentors, than spiritual fathers to the souls of men. Pagan tyranny and persecution confined its rage to the body, but these children of Satan seek to plunge

the soul into everlasting pain. Yea, they are worse than the fiends themselves ; for the fiends torment no human soul, but for the measureless enormity of sin : while these clerks of Satan doom souls to hell for some trifling due, which poverty may disable them from paying, and which, after all, is no lawful debt, but a mere fraudulent exaction, founded on usages that have no warrant in the commandments of God ¹. He hesitates not to add, that when prelates extend their execrations to all that shall commune with men, whom they have declared to be accursed, they may be said, virtually, to include the Almighty himself in their maledictions ; for God assuredly does not cease his communion with the vilest outcast, so long as he affords him breath and sustenance, and is ready to restore him to grace and forgiveness. And well, he says, may men wonder at this prodigality of cursing, called forth, as it often is, not for false oaths, and infernal ribaldry, and other offences against the majesty of God and Christ—but for some invasion of the interests, and privileges, and wayward customs of the priesthood ². Fearful must have been the abuses which could have stirred the spirit of any man to these fierce denunciations ; more especially of a man who never questioned the legitimacy of spiritual censures, as one essential department of ecclesiastical discipline, when duly and charitably administered, with a single eye to the promotion of holiness, and to the purification of the Church ³.

¹ Great sentence of curse expounded, c. xvii. See Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 283, 284.

² Ibid. c. xxv.

³ Apology for Lollard Doctrines, p. 13, ed. Todd, 1842.

Papal power and
Supremacy.

The whole of Wiclid's life is a perpetual commentary on his views respecting the authority of the Pope, whether temporal or spiritual. That he allowed a certain precedence of honour and authority to the Bishop of Rome, would appear from a passage in his treatise on the Truth of Scripture, in which he holds, that a man incurs the charge of Paganism, who scornfully refuses obedience to the Apostolic See: and we have seen that in his letter to the Pope, towards the close of his life, he addresses him as the greatest of Christ's Vicars upon earth. But he had no conception that this transcendent dignity could adhere unalienably to men who often brought to the Apostolic Chair the worst passions of man's fallen nature. Neither spiritual infallibility, nor secular supremacy, could, in his judgment or belief, be the attributes of the "worldly priest of Rome, the most accursed of cut-purses, the evil man-slayer, and burner of the servants of Christ." Hence it is that his days were passed in incessant warfare against this "Master of the Emperor, this fellow of God, this Deity on earth," and against the whole army of clerical satellites and slaves, who conspired to bow the neck of Europe under his dominion. And, whatever may, at any period, have been his respect for the Pope, in the *ideal* perfection of his character,—of the *actual* Pope, he scruples not to pronounce that he is the veriest Anti-christ⁴.

His prodigal application of the term *Anti-Christ*

⁴ *Potissimus Anti-Christus. De Verit. Scripturæ, in James's Apology, c. iii. s. 4. On Prelates, c. xxii.*

to the Pope, shows that Wiclid was, more or less, infected with certain wild notions which were then current in the world, and which have not yet been wholly banished from it. These notions appear to have been derived from an entire misconception of those well-known passages in the Epistles of St. John⁵, which distinguish *the Anti-Christ* by the following marks: namely, a denial that Jesus is the Christ, a denial of the Father and the Son, and a denial that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh; in other words, a denial of the Messiahship of Jesus, of his Incarnation, and of his filial relation to the Father. And, it may be safely affirmed that, whatever may be the vices of the Papacy, it has never yet committed itself to these impieties. Even while Wiclid was writing, the Pope would, doubtless, have been ready to consign to the flames any one who should dare to maintain such heresies. It was contended, however, by Wiclid and his followers, upon the authority of these very passages, that all who are contrary to Christ, whether in their life, or faith, may properly be called *Anti-christs*⁶. Now, that the tendencies of that compound phenomenon, the See and Court of Rome, were, in many respects, *Anti-Christian*, none but a Romanist would deny. But this is no more than might be affirmed of any other Christian state or polity, nay, of any individual, so far as it could be proved that their practices were in contradiction to the mind and will of Christ.

⁵ 1 John ii. 18. 22; iv. 3. 2 John 7.

⁶ Apology for the Lollard Doctrines, p. 53, &c. edited by Dr. Todd, 1842.



Yet it would be quite erroneous to allege such instances as a fulfilment of the sayings of the Apostle. Whether the Papacy will ever develop itself into an *Infidel power*, and so accomplish the prophecy, is a question which time only can resolve. But, hitherto, it has done nothing to brand itself with that peculiar note of reprobation. Wiclif, however, like many others, seems to have thought that nothing too bad could be said of the Pope. And his language has, probably, helped to give currency to the notion, that the Papacy is an express and specific fulfilment of those Scriptures which speak of the coming of the *Anti-christ*.

His passion for simplifying the Episcopacy. His passion for simplifying the Episcopacy. The institutions of Christianity is strangely manifested in his opinions respecting the hierarchy. The spiritual aristocracy in his time was, undoubtedly, a phenomenon which the primitive Evangelists, if they could revisit the earth, might be supposed to contemplate with astonishment. And Wiclif, whose thoughts were constantly wandering back to the days of apostolic simplicity, had looked upon the Pontiff and his cardinals, the patriarchs, archbishops and bishops, the archdeacons, officials and deans, and the whole inferior retinue of the Romish priesthood, till his heart grew sick at the spectacle of what he regarded as so much cumbrous and "*Caesarean*" pomp. Whether he would have altogether discarded the Episcopal order, had he been allowed to carry into effect his own principles of Reformation, or whether he would have retained it as a convenient and useful appointment, it is impossible to pronounce with any certainty. But it seems

perfectly clear that he did not consider it as at all essential to the legitimate constitution of a Christian Church. He not only asserts that "by the Institution of Christ, priests and bishops are all one ;" but, in defiance of history, he, afterwards, affirms that, "*the Emperor divided them*, and made bishops lords, and presbyters their servants : " and, again, that "from the faith of Scripture, it seems sufficient that there should be presbyters and deacons holding the state and offices which Christ assigned them ; since it appears that all other orders and degrees have their origin in the *pride of Cæsar*."⁷

In correspondence with these notions
were certain other favourite positions
of Wiclid and his Lollards ; all tending to disparage
the Episcopal dignity, and to establish the independence
of the lower orders of the ministry. He held
that, in the exercise of all his functions, every priest
is wholly free from Episcopal control ; and, more
especially, that he was not only entitled, but bound,
to preach without any licence from the bishop, and
even in spite of the bishop's prohibition : and this,
too, whether he had cure of souls, or not⁸. These
principles were fully exemplified in the practice of
Wiclid's *Poor Priests* : and it is almost needless to
point out the extent of licence into which the same
principles developed themselves in later times.

Another of his extravagant opinions was, that it

⁷ MS. on the Seven Deadly Sins. Cod. Ric. Jamesii. Bibl. Bodl. Trialog. lib. iv. c. 15. James's *Apology*, p. 31. Lewis, c. viii. p. 154, 155, 157.

⁸ *Apology for the Lollard Doctrines*, p. 28—37, ed. Todd. 1842.

is a mortal sin to receive the ministrations of a priest who is living in profligacy ; and that ignorance of the character of the priest affords no excuse to the layman, unless he shall have taken the precaution of careful inquiry into the habits of the delinquent. The principle here assumed was singularly vexatious and absurd. For, in the first place, it virtually constituted every layman an inquisitor, and a judge, and almost a spy, over the clergy : and, secondly, it involved the consequence, that the Sacraments are vitiated by the unworthiness of the minister. The effects of these notions were so pernicious, even up to the period of the Reformation, that it was found necessary to provide a guard against them, in the 26th Article of our Church ⁹.

Respecting the Church itself, there is reason to believe that his views were such as all faithful members of the Anglican Communion would do well to keep in mind at the present day. It is lamented by one who had evidently imbibed his principles¹, that “ when men speak of Holy Church, they understand anon prelates and priests, canons and friars, and all men that have crowns, (tonssures), though they live never so cursedly against God’s law ; and they clepe (call) not nor hold secular men to be of Holy Church, though they live never so truly after God’s law, and end in perfect charity : ” whereas the true notion of a Church comprehends the clergy, the secular lords,

⁹ *Apology for the Lollard Doctrines*, p. 37, ed. Todd. Also the Editor’s Introduction, p. xxx. xxxi.

¹ Lewis, c. viii. p. 152, from the *Elucidarium Bibliorum* ; which, if not written by Wiclf, was, pretty evidently, written by a Lollard.

and the commons, the lay members, in short, as well as the spiritual orders. The evils arising from this misconception are of the most opposite descriptions. The same error, according to the varying complexion of the times, on the one hand, elevates the consecrated class to an almost preternatural immunity and power ; or, on the other, places them in most injurious disunion from the rest of the social body, with which, in truth, they should be indissolubly bound up. It should never be forgotten that the hierarchy alone does not constitute the Church ; and that both the privileges and the responsibilities of churchmanship belong to the laity as well as to the clergy, according to their several opportunities and stations.

In common with the soundest doctors, he allows the distinction between ^{Church visible and invisible.} the Church visible, and the Church invisible. The former he calls the *very body* of Christ ; the latter his *medlied* (or mixed) *body* ; which includes men ordained to bliss, and hypocrites doomed to perdition². His fanciful and nugatory distribution of the Church militant into the clergy, the military, and the populace³, is scarcely worthy of notice. It is needless to accumulate passages for the purpose of showing that he postponed the authority of the Church to that of the Holy Scriptures ; that he ^{Supremacy of} disregarded tradition as a rule of faith ^{Scripture.} co-ordinate with the written word ; that he maintained that all things necessary to salvation might be found in the Sacred Volume, and that the oracles

² Lewis, c. viii. p. 152.

³ Ibid. p. 153.

of God might freely be consulted by all Christian people. These opinions are profusely scattered throughout his writings, and were finally embodied in the mightiest of all his works, the translation of the Bible. As for the assertion that the Church is of more authority and credence than the Gospel, he reprobates it as "a forecasting of Satan to destroy Holy Writ and the belief of Christian men, by means of Antichrist, and his false and worldly clerks⁴." "Though we had a hundred Popes," he tells us, "and all the friars in the world were turned into cardinals, yet should we trow more the law of the Gospel, than all this multitude⁵."

The sacraments. There seems to be little doubt that,

to the last, Wiclid acknowledged the sacraments of the Romish Church ; for in one of his latest works he speaks of them as seven in number⁶. But then it may be questioned whether he attached to the word sacrament, a signification of such deep importance and solemnity as we have been accustomed to. He understands by it "a token that may be seen, of a *thing* which may not be seen with any bodily eye ;" but he does not allow every sacrament to be generally necessary to salvation⁷. With regard

Baptism. to Baptism, he denies the necessity of chrism, or of trine immersion, or of any thing more than the affusion of water. That he deemed the baptism of infants to be requisite, is evi-

⁴ Lewis, c. viii. p. 155.

⁵ James's Apol. c. i. s. 2. See also Vaugh. vol. p. 312—317.

⁶ Trialog. iv. 1.

⁷ Lewis, c. viii. 165.

dent from his concession, that females may be allowed to administer it to children in cases of urgent need : but he abstains from any presumptuous determination respecting the future condition of infants unbaptized. As a caution against formality or superstition, he adds, that priests must minister the outward token ; but that the spiritual grace within, which we see not, is ministered to us of God, who is the priest and bishop of our souls. It is he alone that christeneth the soul, that is, washeth it from the uncleanness of all manner of sin ; and therefore children, and sometimes men and women, are christened with water⁸.

Of Confirmation he speaks as a rite, the importance of which has been much exaggerated, to the disparagement of *more worthy and needful sacraments*⁹. The ceremonies with which it was loaded, he condemns as unscriptural ; professes himself unable to see why this sacrament should be reserved to *Cæsarean* prelates ; and suggests that the short and trifling Confirmation performed by them, together with its pompous mummery, must, probably, have been introduced by the instigation of the devil, for the purpose of deluding the people, and advancing the importance and dignity of the Episcopal order¹ ! In perusing this passage, we could well nigh fancy that we had before us the very words of those intractable and self-willed spirits who, two centuries later, were demolished by

⁸ Lewis, c. viii. p. 166, 167.

⁹ Sentence of Curse, &c. c. vii. Vaugh. vol. ii. p. 308.

¹ Trialog. iv. 14. Lewis, c. viii. p. 167.

the learning and incomparable irony of Hooker². Sacrament, or no sacrament, the rite of Confirmation, administered by bishops, has the sanction of Scripture, followed up by the testimony of the most venerable fathers, and by the immemorial usage of Christendom. And, yet, such was the dishonour brought upon it by frivolous and superstitious vanities, that, in the eyes of Wiclit, it seemed to be little better than a worthless trifle.

In what precise sense it was that Penance. Wiclit ascribed the sacramental character to absolution and penance, it would be very difficult to say. The act of confession to an intelligent and holy minister, accompanied by sincere contrition, and all the fruits meet for repentance, were, unquestionably, regarded by him as among the most profitable and salutary of religious duties³. And, since unfeigned penitence for sin is, undoubtedly, necessary to salvation, this mode of expressing sorrow, and seeking pardon, might be allowed by him to retain its place among the sacraments of the Church. It is, however, beyond dispute that he deemed the exercise of the sacerdotal office in this solemnity to be a matter of very subordinate importance. In making themselves the *principal* parties in *assoiling*, or absolving, the sinner, he affirmed, that the priesthood were blasphemers against the Father of heaven, to whom alone belongs the power of remission. The function of the priest he considered to be purely ministerial and de-

² Book v. s. 66.

³ Great Sentence of Curse, &c. c. vi. Lewis c. viii. p. 171.

claratory. They are “vicars and messengers,” ordained to testify that God grants absolution to the truly penitent: and when they take upon themselves to pronounce judicially the sacramental absolution, they are, in his judgment, usurpers of God’s majesty, deceivers of the people, and encouragers of vice⁴. And he distinctly asserts, that “in schrift, though we tell our sins to a priest, and he put us on penance, we are assoiled never the rather, *but if* (unless) God, who is the priest of souls, see that we sorrow with all our hearts for our sins, and that we be in full purpose and will to leave them for ever after⁵. ”

Episcopal Ordination, he expressly recognises as a sacramental ordinance: Ordination. but he seems to question whether it imprints an indelible character. The nature, or, as he terms it, the *quiddity* of this character, he tells us, is a matter of much dispute: and, he therefore prays, that God would be pleased to confer on the clergy some further grace; the *character* in question being found, in such a multitude of instances, to be useless and ineffective. In speaking on this subject, he seizes the opportunity of reprobating the multiplied and intolerable exactions which were practised in conferring the sacerdotal office⁶, and which gave to the transaction an appearance of Simoniacal trafficking.

⁴ Of Prelates, MS. 43. Lewis, c. viii. p. 167, 168.

⁵ Of the Seven Sacraments, MS. Lewis, cviii. p. 168.

⁶ There is one of these enormities which seems, more especially, to move his indignation. Not only were exorbitant gratuities exacted for the Letters of Orders, but the authorized officiating barber was, -usually, so unconscionable in his de-

His speculations respecting the sacrament of matrimony are strangely subtle and fantastical. He conceives it to have been ordained, not only for the perpetuation of mankind until the day of doom, and for the suppression of licentious intercourse, but, also, for the restoration and fulfilment of the multitude of angels damned for pride, and the completion of the number of the saints in heaven⁷. He condemns the practices of the courts which pronounce matrimony valid from words of consent; apparently forgetting that the secret intention is hidden from human judges, who are able to decide only from overt acts, and that, if the ordinance is to be considered as sacramental, it would, of course, require a sensible and outward sign⁸. He seems to question the application of the Levitical prohibitions to Christian societies, and even to contend for the restoration of the usages prevalent in the earliest ages of the world : marriage, within the very *closest* degrees of propinquity, being, in his opinion, condemned only by arbitrary human maxims and institutions⁹. Nevertheless, he appears to have allowed

mands for executing the clerical tonsure, that a man, he complains, might actually be shaved and clipped for a whole year together, by an ordinary practitioner, for the same sum that was extorted by the official artist on this one occasion. This, says Wiclif, is a foul extortion ! Lewis, c. viii. p. 157.

⁷ Of wedded men and wives. MS. c. i. Lewis, c. viii. p. 171.

⁸ Trialogus, iv. 22. Lewis, c. viii. p. 172.

⁹ Tempore primi hominis, *fratres et sorores fuerunt, ex ordinatione divina, taliter conjugati : et tempore Patriarcharum, ut Abraham, Isaac, et Iacob, satis propinquè cognati. Nec superest ratio, quare non sic liceret hodiè, nisi humana ordi-*

that marriages prohibited by the Church are better avoided; though, when solemnized, they ought to be held valid and irrevocable¹.

Respecting the Eucharist, it is, perhaps, more easy to state with precision The Eucharist. what he *did not* believe, than what he *did*. He did not believe that the substance of Christ's body was miraculously substituted for that of the bread. He did not believe in any separation of accidents, or qualities, from their proper subject. He did not believe, in short, that the visible emblems ceased to retain their own nature after the words of consecration. But that some sort of change was effected, he assuredly did believe; and that this change was of sufficient importance to warrant us in affirming that Christ's body is *really* present in the Eucharist. The precise manner of this presence he does not undertake to define; but contents himself with vaguely describing it as figurative or sacramental: and he conceives that many things are involved in this mysterious subject, which form no part of necessary faith, and which should neither be granted nor denied, but treated rather as matter of humble and reverent conjecture².

The number of seven sacraments Extreme Unction. cannot be made up without admitting

natio, quee dicit non solum ex cognatione, sed ex affinitate, amorem inter homines dilatari: et causa haec hominum est nimis debilis. Trialogus, lib. iv. c. 20, 21. Lewis, c. viii. p. 173.

¹ Apology, &c. p. 70—73, ed. Todd.

² Seven deadly Sins. MS. Cod. James. Also, James's Apol. c. viii. Apology, &c. p. 45—48, ed. Todd.

extreme unction among them : and yet Wiclid has been charged with the heresy of denying to that rite the sacramental character³. The truth probably is, that he suffered it to remain on the list of sacraments, without allowing it to be requisite to salvation ; for we have seen that he did not consider all the sacraments to be of equal necessity and worthiness.

Celibacy of the clergy. The compulsory celibacy of the clergy, and the forcible imposition of monastic vows, he reprobates as practices tending to flagitious corruption of manners⁴. Prudent and

Fasting. “*measurable*” fasting he held to be salutary. But abstinence from flesh,

only to indulge in fish, he derides as *fool-fasting*, and as nothing better than another form of gluttony : and fasting beyond the powers of nature, he censures as a mistaken and presumptuous emulation of Elias or of Christ⁵.

Ceremonies. Ceremonies, he allows to be useful, as sensible signs by which

men may be led into the way of happiness, but deprecates the cumbrous and fantastic details of the existing ritual ; and he complains that the slightest neglect of these was more dreaded than a breach of God’s commandments⁶.

Church music. Among the many “fretful and angry sentences” which fell from Wiclid, there are few which savour more strongly of fanatical aus-

³ James’s Apol. c. viii. s. 4.

⁴ Order of Priesthood, MS. c. ix. Wedded Men, &c. MS. Lewis, c. viii. p. 163, 164. James’s Apol. c. viii. s. 12, 13.

⁵ James’s Apol. c. viii. s. 13. Apology for Lollard Doctrines, p. 44, ed. Todd.

⁶ Trialogus, iv. 11. Lewis, c. viii. p. 174.

terity, than those which he has bestowed on the vocal and instrumental Psalmody of the Church. Nothing appears more vehemently to have moved his bile than what he is pleased to term the "novelrie of song," which had then been introduced into our religious services. He loudly complains that it not only diverted the attention both of priest and worshipper from their devotional duties, but was maintained at an enormous cost, which might be applied to much better purposes. Such, according to his representation, was the frivolity and artifice of these performances, that "it's small breking stirred vain men to dauncing more than mourning :" and he warns the "fools" who delight in it, that they "shulden dread the sharp words of Austin, that saith, As oft as the song liketh me more than doth the sentence sung, so oft I confess that I sin grievously." The temple services of the old law he rejects as models for the Christian worship, the best distinctions of which are its simplicity and spirituality. "And if," he observes, "they seyn that angels hearen God by song in heaven, seye that we kunnen not that song : they ben in full victory of their enemies ; but we ben in perilous battle, and in the vally of weeping and mourning ; and our song letteth us fro better occupation, and stirreth us to many great sins, and to forget ourselves. But our fleshy people hath more liking in their bodily ears, in such knacking and tattering, than in hearing of God's law, or speaking of bliss in heaven. . . . When there ben fourty or fifty in a quire, three or four proud and lecherous losels⁷ shullen knack the

⁷ Worthless fellows.

most devout service, that no man shall hear the sentence, and all other shullen be dumb, and looken on them, as fools. And then, strumpets and thieves praisen Sire Jack, or Hobb, and William the proud Clerk, how small they knacken their notes, and seyn that they serven well God and Holy Church ; when they despisen God in his face, and letten other Christian men of their devotion and compunction, and stirren them to worldly vanity. And thus the true service of God is letted, and this vain knacking, for our jollity and pride, is praised above the moon⁸."

Here we cannot but recognise the same spirit, which, in after times, suggested that the practice of chanting derived its authority from the contrivance of the Devil ; by whose advice it was, that this mode of singing was accounted as an invention of Ignatius, or an imitation of the angels of heaven ! If the celebration of God's holy name were marred and dishonoured, in Wiclid's days, by unbecoming exhibitions of musical skill, the correction of the abuse was, doubtless, a worthy object of his anxiety. His language, however, leaves us under the impression, that he regarded all musical performance as a vanity, which ought to be banished from our public worship. " In Church music," says a Reformer of a very different complexion, " curiosity and ostentation of art,—wanton, light, or unsuitable harmony,—doth rather blemish and disgrace that which we do, than add either beauty or furtherance unto it. On the other side, *the faults prevented*, the force and efficacy of the thing itself,—when it drowneth not utterly, but

⁸ Of Prelates, c. xi. cited in Lewis, c. viii. p. 162, 163.

fitly suiteth with matter altogether sounding to the praise of God, is, in truth, most admirable ; and doth much edify,—if not the understanding, because it teacheth not,—yet, surely, the affection, because therein it worketh much. They must have hearts *very dry and tough*, from whom the melody of the Psalms doth not, sometime, draw that, wherein a mind religiously affected delighteth⁹."

There was, prevalent, in those times, a variety of superstitious practices, all of which are positively condemned by Wiclif: for instance, the use of sentences from the Gospel, hung about the neck as an amulet or charm,—the practice of witchcraft, divination, and enchantment, in every possible form,—the belief of preternatural virtue inherent in herbs or stones, or belonging to a certain form of words. All these he pronounced to be forbidden by the authority of Scripture and the Church¹. It should also be mentioned to his honour, that he despised the absurdities of Judicial Astrology. He affirmed that the so-called science of the astrologer was destitute of all foundation: that all his maxims and opinions rested on no substratum of knowledge². To venture on such an assertion, in the fourteenth century, must have required no ordinary exercise of intrepidity and judgment.

It is a frequent complaint of Wiclif, that notions were constantly ascribed to him which, in fact, he never entertained. Of these, there is one so ex-

Superstitious practices.

Judicial Astrology.

Notions Imputed to Wiclif, that God must obey the Devil; and that every creature is God.

⁹ Hooker, b. v. s. 38.

¹ Apology, &c. ed. Todd. p. 90—100.

² Lewis, p. 174. Trialogus, lib. ii. c. 15.

travagantly profane, that it is difficult to imagine by what process of torture it can have been extracted from his writings. We have seen, above, that among the articles preferred against him at Oxford, he is charged with maintaining, that *God could not choose but obey the Devil!* And this charge, it appears, has since been repeated by Bellarmine, and the Jesuit Gretser; who, likewise, impute to him another notion, scarcely less monstrous, that *every creature is God*. This latter accusation was probably drawn from certain abstruse metaphysical speculations of Wiclid's, in which he intimates, that all the laws of truth, residing in the Divine Essence, are no other than God himself; nay, that every thing in the universe, considered with reference to its intelligible essence, is identified with the Deity³. It would be difficult to develope these obscure imaginings; but to suppose that they were intended by Wiclid to involve the unqualified impieties and absurdities of Pantheism, is, in effect, to maintain that a few sentences of abstract scholastic disquisition are to obliterate the testimony of a whole life. Surely, no synod of Inquisitors would burn a poet for saying, with Thompson, that all the glorious phenomena of nature "are but the varied God." And, if so, it is not easy to see why the displeasure, even of the soundest divines, should rise against a Christian philosopher, who might contemplate a pervading Deity in the essence of all created things. As for

³ *Omnes veritatis leges in Essentia Divinâ, sicut omnia, sunt Deus.* Again: *Omnis res, secundum esse intelligibile, est Deus.*—*Expos. Decal.* cited in James's *Apology*, c. ix. 10th and 11th Objections.

the position, that *God must obey the Devil*, it is the raving of a maniac, rather than the aberration of a heretic. In what part of Wiclif's writings his enemies professed to read this blasphemy, I have not been able to discover. He says, indeed, that God is a title which is sometimes used in an absolute sense, at other times in a sense more qualified. It is properly applied only to the Lord of the universe : it is, however, occasionally introduced to signify any other object which may usurp the adoration and service that is due to Him alone⁴; (as when the commandment says, *Thou shalt have none other Gods but me*;) and over such a *God* as this, it cannot be denied, that the Devil may be supposed to exercise a very legitimate dominion. I have seen no other passage but this produced as the possible foundation for the charge in question : and one would imagine, that it must surpass even the subtlety of a Jesuit, to infer from the words “a conclusion so foul and irreligious,” that, as Dr. James remarks, “scarcely any Devil of hell would dare to utter it.”

We have already seen that, among the positions ascribed to Wiclif, one of the most formidable is this, that *dominion is founded on grace* ; a maxim which fanaticism might inscribe upon its banners ; and which, taken to the letter, cries *havoc* in the ears of the elect, and would soon let slip the dogs of war and anarchy upon the world.

⁴ *Dei acceptio duplex ; absolutè, Dominus Dominorum : quando contrahitur, vel specificatur, per signum detrahens, significat quocunque bonum quod quis plus diligit.* Expos. Decal cited by James. Ibid.

It has been assumed by some that this is the cardinal and distinguishing principle of the Reformer ; a charge which, if fully established, would be sufficient to fix dishonour on his memory. It should be recollected, however, that in his English writings, designed for popular instruction, very few passages are to be found which contain any allusion to this maxim : and further, that in his Trialogus, the doctrine is expressed in a very moderate and guarded manner⁵. He there observes that, “as Christ, by the title of original righteousness, was master of all the possessions of the world, even so, all things belong to the just, by the grace and favour of Christ.” But then, he immediately adds, that “with this title of grace they must rest content.” They may be satisfied that the world is theirs ; but they must on no account enforce their right by any worldly means : “for the law of Christ forbids his disciples to contend for temporal things, however clearly and rightly their own.” Surely the lords of the earth might hear with great composure, a claim to all the good things in it, if accompanied by a law which positively forbade the claimants to take a single step towards realizing their visionary right.

⁵ “*Titulo originalis justitiae habuit Christus omnia bona mundi ; ut ssepe declarat Augustinus,—illo titulo, vel titulo gratiae, justorum sunt omnia : sed longe ab illo titulo civilis possessio. Unde Christus et sui Apostoli, spretâ dominatione civili, fuerunt de habitione purè ; secundum illum titulum contentati. Ideo regula Christi est, quæ (quod !) nullus discipulorum suorum presumat pro temporalibus suis contendere ; ut patet, Matth. vi. qui auffert quæ tua sunt ne repetas. Sed longè sunt leges civiles, et consuetudo dominantium, ab illâ sententia.*” Trialog. lib. iv. Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 235, note 6.

But, again, the oppression and licentiousness of the age were such as seemed to indicate that men had well nigh lost all remembrance of the tenure by which they hold their possessions, and their privileges, *at the hand of God*. And Wiclif's sense of these evils was expressed in the maxim, that "no one in mortal sin hath a true dominion over any of the creatures, *apud Deum*, in the sight of God ; but deserves to be called a tyrant and a robber ; although, by reason of some human law, he retain the name of king, or prince, or lord." This is the language of his *Trialogus*, as represented by his adversary, Wodford⁶, and it is quite in harmony with one of his English compositions :—"If temporal lords do wrongs and extortions to the people, they be traitors to God and his people, and tyrants of Anti-Christ⁷." These, undoubtedly, are very bitter words. But they are not much more bitter than religion, and morality, and even history, have sometimes bestowed on men whose vices and oppressions have blackened the annals of the world. Nevertheless, it is greatly to be lamented that Wiclif, and others, did not wholly abstain from language, which, when uttered by a public religious teacher, would certainly be liable to the most mischievous perversion. It is true that exhortations to obedience and loyalty are scattered over his works. But it might easily be foreseen that the dangerous maxims themselves would speedily get abroad, but without the qualifying and cautionary precepts which alone could make them innocent or safe. The title of

⁶ *Adversus J. Wiclefum*. See Lewis, c. viii. p. 142.

⁷ *Ecclesiæ Regimen*. *Ibid.*

the just would be remembered, and the prohibition to enforce it would be forgotten⁸. These principles were actually thus abused long afterwards, by the German Anabaptists, when they maintained that the time was come for *the meek ones to inherit the earth* ; their title thereto being the same with that by which the Israelites seized the property of the Egyptians. Such wresting of Scripture, at all times extremely perilous, becomes objectionable in a tenfold degree, when it assumes the form of a commentary on existing institutions, or even a denunciation of existing abuses. Neither can it be questioned that the words of Wiclit in the mouth of the more ignorant of his followers, may have helped to impart something of a revolutionary character to the spirit of Lollardism, and to give currency to the belief, that the saints are the only legitimate proprietors of all things⁹.

⁸ These notions, it seems, had been adopted by the Albigenses : but, whatever may be its demerits, it is with a very bad grace that the Papists affected to reprobate it, professing, as they did, a doctrine still more dangerous to the peace of mankind ; namely, that the lives and sceptres of kings are at the mercy of the Pope. "That dominion is founded in grace," says Fuller, "seemeth to be the very opinion of the Albigenses : yea, it hangeth as yet in the schools upon the file, as a thing disputable, finding many favourers. But grant it a great error—(for wicked men shall be arraigned before God, not as usurpers, but as tyrants ; *not* for not having right, but for not right using the creature)—yet herein they proceeded not so far as the Papists now-a-days, to unthrone and depose excommunicated princes : so that they who do most accuse them, have least cause to do so." Fuller, *Holy War*, b. iii. c. 20.

⁹ That dominion is founded on grace, is a notion which, probably, lurks to this day in some of the dark corners of

With regard to unworthy Churchmen, the language of Wiclif is still more hazardous. He did not scruple to affirm, that one who is living in mortal sin is neither bishop, nor prelate ; and that temporal lords may, at their discretion, seize the possessions and estates of unfaithful Churchmen. The former of these propositions was stigmatized as heretical ; but, whether heretical or not, it is impossible to explain it away into any meaning which is not full of danger. The latter position has a more alarming sound, to modern ears, than it had to the ears of the generation to whom

fanaticism. It is, indeed, one vital element of Antinomianism, “that thick-skinned monster of the ooze and the mire ;” as appears from the following account, given by Wesley, of his conversation with one of the most oracular persons of that persuasion :—

Do you believe you have nothing to do with the law of God ?

I have not. I am not under the law. I live by faith.

Have you, as living by faith, a right to every thing in the world ?

I have. All is mine, since Christ is mine.

May you, then, take any thing you will, any where ? Suppose, out of a shop, without the consent or knowledge of the owner ?

I may, if I want it ; for it is mine : only I would not give offence.

Have you, also, a right to all the women in the world ?

Yes, if they consent.

And is not that a sin ?

Yes, to him that thinks it sin ; but not to those whose hearts are free.—Southey’s Life of Wesley, vol. ii. p. 319. And this they call being *perfect* in Christ, not in themselves ! One would gladly see such *perfection* under a scourge like that of Wiclif, in spite of all that has been said concerning his patronage of it.

it was addressed. When we hear of *temporal lords*, we are apt to think of noblemen or landholders, in their private capacity; and to suppose that it was the desire of Wiclif to place the possessions of the Church at the mercy and *discretion* of every territorial proprietor. But, in fact, the title of *temporal lords*, was, in those days, equivalent to that of temporal governors or authorities: and in this sense it is that Wiclif must be understood, when he speaks of the endowments of the Church as being at the disposal of secular men, in cases of clerical delinquency. He held, in short, the entire supremacy of the State over all orders and degrees of men, ecclesiastical as well as civil. In this respect his principles were at mortal variance with the established doctrine of the Papal Church; according to which, the possessions of the clergy were, under all imaginable circumstances, absolutely sacred and inviolable. The evil consequences of this doctrine had become so intolerable in the days of Wiclif, that he frequently cast away all moderation in his protest against it. The mischiefs it occasioned extorted from him an almost incessant appeal to the wisdom of the ruling powers; whose province, he contended, it was, to see that there should be some connection between the discharge of duty, and the enjoyment of ample emoluments. And the urgency of his denunciations was greatly increased by the persuasion which he fre-

Wiclif considers quently expresses, that the spirit of Church endow- Christianity was violated by the en- ments as incon- sistent with the spirit of Christ- dowments of the clergy¹; and that ianity. “venom was poured into the Church,”

¹ That such was his conviction, appears constantly in his

on the very day which first invested her ministers, as such, with the rights of property. He was withheld by no scruples in denouncing the abuse of revenues, held by a title which he conceived to be doubtful, if not positively vicious; and the vehement language in which he clamoured for a reformation of it, must have sounded, in the ears of many, as a welcome signal for spoliation.

Among the hardest of Wiclit's doctrines, relative to clerical emoluments, may be reckoned that which he held more especially respecting ^{Tithes represented} ~~ed by him as~~ *alms*. It has already been observed that he speaks of them merely as *alms*; an expression which seems to imply, that the clergy were to be left to the mercy, the caprice, or the *conscience*, of their parishioners. Some consideration has already been bestowed upon this opinion of the Reformer; and it has been intimated that his view of this matter was, mainly, suggested by the fact, that all church property, of every description, originated in voluntary bounty, and might, therefore, without impropriety, be regarded as *eleemosynary*. And this presumption is fortified by his assertion, that it is the province of kings and others to rectify, or to regulate, *the alms of their progenitors*². After all, however, his lan-

writings; and no where more evidently, than in a passage of the Trialogus, lib. iv.; in which he complains that “leges istae mundaneæ, et executio furiosa illarum, sunt, tam culpabiliter, inter Clericos introductæ Nam habere civiliter, cum necessitate ad solicitudinem circa temporalia, et leges hominum observandas, debet omnino clericis interdici.”

² Interest regum et aliorum rectificare *eleemosynas* progeni-

guage, on this subject, is generally so unqualified, as still to leave it doubtful, whether he did not consider every congregation, nay, every individual of the congregation,—as at liberty to withhold all payments from the minister, whenever they might imagine that his life was such as rendered him unworthy of their liberality. Most assuredly it *was* his doctrine, that the indignant layman was infinitely less culpable in refusing tithes or offerings, than the unfaithful clergyman in disregarding his sacred obligations. His thoughts were constantly attracted towards the model of apostolic poverty. He himself went often barefoot, clad in a gown of frieze; and his poor itinerant priests usually did the same. It can, therefore, scarcely be doubted that he would most gladly have seen the ecclesiastical order reduced to a much closer conformity with the primitive example, and made more dependent, for their support, on the zeal and painfulness of their own ministrations. And, as the clergy of his time were compelled to a life of celibacy, comparatively moderate funds would be sufficient for their subsistence. Still, it is but fair that he should be vindicated from the imputation fixed upon him by the misconception even of certain of his apologists. Misled by his use of the word *alms*, they imagined that he would have condemned the ministers of the Gospel to beg their bread³. Now, a great part of his life

torum suorum. De Verit. Script. p. 466. James's Apol. c. ix. obj. 5.

³ James's Apol. c. ix. obj. 2 of the apologists. I have thought it unnecessary to load the pages of a compendious work like this with interminable citations from Wicliif's writings, in support of the above representations of his prin-

was passed in one uncompromising struggle against religious mendicancy ; and this circumstance alone might surely have satisfied his friends, at least, that, even if he wished to consign the clergy to the spontaneous bounty of their people, he would never have thought of driving them to solicit their maintenance from door to door.

Wiclf has often been spoken of as the morning star of the Reformation : General view of Wiclf's services. an honour which Grostete, perhaps, might fairly be entitled to contest with him. Wiclf, undoubtedly, was a luminary ominous of change ; and formidably menacing to gross error and corruption. Its brightness, of course, was hateful to the Papacy ; but, its aspect can scarcely be contemplated as uniformly auspicious to the cause of primitive order and Catholic truth.

He might, perhaps, be more justly represented as the great pioneer of the Reformation : and, it cannot be denied that, like other pioneers, he was apt to ply the axe with unsparing and indiscriminate violence. He, occasionally, seems to work like one who was rather making a complete clearance for the foundation of new structures, than removing the rubbish which encumbered and deformed the old. This vehemence of action, however, was such as must sometimes be expected in natures like his, with their excess of athletic vigour, and their fervid impatience of wrong. Capacious and overruling spirits are rarely sent into

plex. My statements are the result of a careful examination of the materials before me. Any person desirous of ampler details, may find them in Dr. James's *Apology*, and in the works of Mr. Lewis and Mr. Vaughan.

this world, but they “have in them something dangerous.” Nevertheless he must be duly honoured as the instrument which Providence vouchsafed to use ; though we may regret that, while his weapons were busy in the ranks of error, their sway should have frequently been dangerous to the closely neighbouring truth.

Notion of the Reformation, as it would, probably, have been effected by Wiclid. In estimating his rank among the great intellects which have influenced the fortunes of mankind, we shall hardly,

perhaps, be justified in assigning him a place with those who have been most distinguished for philosophic depth, or steadiness of judgment. The foregoing survey of his labours and opinions must shew, that he was too violently agitated by the evils of his time, to weigh or measure, with the necessary firmness of hand, the expedients needful for their correction. He seems to have been somewhat better fitted for the business of demolition than of building up. As the fearless assailant of abuse, nothing could well be more dauntless than his bearing. But, had he succeeded in shaking the established system to its foundations, one can scarcely think, without awful misgivings, of the fabric which, under his hand, might have risen out of the ruins. If the reformation of our Church had been conducted by Wiclid, his work, in all probability, would have anticipated the labours of Calvin ; and the Reformed system of England might have pretty closely resembled the Protestantism of Geneva. Episcopal government might then have been discarded—ecclesiastical endowments and foundations might have been, for the most part, sacrificed—the clergy consigned to a de-

grading dependence on their flocks—the worship of God, if not wholly stripped of its ritual solemnity, yet deprived of the aids of instrumental harmony—and, lastly, the fatalism, which lurked in the scholastic writings of the Reformer, might then have stepped forth, and boldly demanded a place in the Confession of the National Church! Had Wiclf flourished in the sixteenth century, it cannot be imagined that he would have been found under the banners of Cranmer and of Ridley. Their caution, their patience, their moderation, would scarcely have been intelligible to him ; and, rather than conform to it, he might, perhaps, have been ready, if needful, *to perish, in the gainsaying* of such men as Knox or Cartwright. It must plainly be confessed, that there is a marvellous resemblance between the Reformer, with his poor itinerant priests, and the sectarians who troubled our Israel in the days of Elizabeth and her successors. The likeness is sufficiently striking almost to mark him out as their prototype and progenitor : and therefore it is, that every faithful son of the Church of England must rejoice thankfully that the work of her final deliverance was not consigned to him. It must be regarded as providential, that he was raised up at a time when his peculiar qualities could be most serviceable. A mighty engine seemed then to be required to shake and loosen the masonry of the Papal fabric, and thus prepare for the labours of wiser and sedater men. For this sort of service Wiclf was excellently adapted : and the energy with which he performed it, though often undisciplined and rash, must demand the deep respect, at least, of the

soberest Anglican Churchman, to the latest generations.

The precipitation of his movements, indeed, must always be a subject of regret rather than of wonder. It is impossible to rise from the study of those “heavy times” without a strong persuasion that the Papal system stands justly answerable, not only for its own encroachments and perversions, but also for many of the wildest excesses of its adversaries. It is one of the curses inflicted on mankind by all flagrant and inveterate abuse, that the momentum, which seems needful for its overthrow, is such, as frequently to carry the assailant very far beyond the boundaries of wisdom and of safety. This is conspicuously exemplified in the history of the Romish Church. She wearied the patience of the world, till the world rose up against her almost with the impetuosity of despair. She mixed up truths and falsehoods together, till the truths themselves came to be suspected. She had sown her tares, till men in their impatience began to root them up ; and, with them, much of the genuine and wholesome grain. Even the good that was within her she caused to be evil-spoken of, and almost abhorred, by linking it with evils at which the heart and conscience of mankind revolted. There was scarcely a Catholic opinion, practice, or institution, which was not placed in jeopardy by her abuse or distortion of it. For example—she developed the reverence due to sainted memories into the semblance of a fantastic mythology ; she expanded the honours of the Virgin Mother into an apparent rivalship with the sovereignty of the cross ; and, under her rule, the

majesty of the Church assumed the form of an avenging power, which might cause the fabled *Eumenides* to seem like tame and feeble ministers of wrath. And, by these enormities, she raised up a fierce antagonism, by which, at length, the frame of society was convulsed. Oppression, we are told, makes wise men mad : and hence, perhaps, much of the sweeping temerity of Wiclit. Hence the fiery and desperate assault of Luther. And hence too, the notion, which, even now, is not wholly extinct among us, that the widest possible departure from Rome, is, of necessity, the nearest approach to truth. In short, the worst disorders of the sectarian spirit are little else than counter-developments, provoked by the vicious developments of Rome. And who can remember without thankfulness to God's gracious providence, that, in the sixteenth century, we had wise men in this land who were *not* driven mad by the oppression ; but, who carried on their resistance to it in a temper of sobriety and wisdom, which preserved us from the loss or forfeiture of any one essential attribute of a truly Catholic Church. Our hearts, indeed, may burn within us, when we think of the struggles of a Wiclit or a Luther. But they are not our masters. Under Christ our leaders are the worthies who gave to us the oracles of Divine truth, with Christian antiquity for their witness and interpreter.

It only remains to be remarked that, in one particular more especially, the times of Wiclit were singularly adapted to engender a fierce spirit of opposition to all existing establishments. In those days there wandered about Christendom a notion, which

the enormities of Romanism probably helped to produce, that the world had seen an end of the Apocalyptic period of a thousand years, during which Satan was to be bound, and that he was then actually loosed from that confinement, and was in the full exercise of his remaining privilege of mischief⁴. To this opinion there are repeated allusions in the writings of Wiclid. He seems to speak of it as a thing beyond all controversy; and to consider the Christian community as once more exposed to the desperate malice of its invisible persecutor and adversary. Now it will easily be understood, that a notion like this would be very likely to create the wildest disturbance in any brain which was firmly possessed by it. When once a man, of an impetuous and fervid temperament, is fully persuaded that the spirit of Antichrist, and the powers of darkness, are actually let loose upon the world, he will be apt to contemplate the dominant institutions with feelings of suspicion and alarm. All the corruptions which might deform the Church, and all the oppressions which might burden society, would readily be ascribed by him to some preternatural and infernal instigation. Arbitrary kings, tyrannical and profligate nobles, selfish and worldly ecclesiastics—all would be regarded as immediate agents of the Evil Potentate—all would appear to be revelling, as it were, in the

its probable influence upon his views and opinions.

⁴ See the beginning of the Fifth Book of Fox, from which it appears, that some reckoned the thousand years from the birth of Christ; others,—as he conceives, more correctly,—from the cessation of the Church's suffering in the days of Constantine. According to either supposition, the period had expired previously to the birth of Wiclid.

carnival of wickedness and delusion, which was to precede the final consummation of all things.

Something of this sort of half-fanatical excitement occasionally betrays itself in the writings and the labours of the Reformer. It may possibly be this which helped to reconcile him to those hazardous speculations, which were thought to menace the rights of property, and to hold up all wicked men to public hatred, not merely as unworthy members of society, but as little better than robbers and usurpers. It is this too, we may reasonably presume, which often prompted him to describe the whole hierarchy of that day as clerks of Antichrist, and servants of the Fiend ; and to represent the Mendicant Orders as the “ tail of the dragon, which drew a third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them on the earth.” And, though he is always for sparing the persons of clerical delinquents, he frequently speaks like one who is prepared for a sweeping destruction of their whole apparatus of iniquity. The extreme danger of such feelings and opinions may now, of course, be easily discerned. The fact however cannot be denied, that such ingredients did actually mix themselves with the torrent, which was partially to cleanse away the foul accumulation of ages.

CHAPTER X.

Wyclif's Poor Priests—*Wyclif's tract, "Why Poor Priests have no Benefices,"* viz. 1. *Their dread of simony*—2. *Their fear of mis-spending the goods of poor men*—3. *That Priests are obliged to preach, whether beneficed or not*—*John Aston*—*John Purney*—*William Swinderby*—*William Thorpe*—*Nicolas Hereford*—*Philip Repingdon*—*Richard Fleming*—*Knighton's representation of Wyclif's followers*—*The fanatic John Ball, not a Disciple of Wyclif*—*The Insurrection of the Peasantry falsely ascribed to Wyclif and his followers*—*Attributed by the Commons to the oppression of the Peasantry*—*Encouragement afforded to Wyclif by the great*—*Edward III.*—*Johanna, Queen Dowager*—*John of Gaunt*—*Anne, Queen of Richard II.*—*Richard II.*—*Various Noblemen and Knights*—*Lord Cobham.*

Wyclif's Poor Priests. IT has already been intimated, that the doctrines and principles of Wyclif were spread almost throughout the realm by the exertions of certain travelling preachers, whom he denominates “Poor Priests;” and whose activity and usefulness is occasionally celebrated by him in the course of his later writings. A brief account of this class of persons may, therefore, properly find a place in this work. There can be little doubt that these are the individuals alluded to in the preamble to that unconstitutional ordinance which was obtained by Archbishop Courtney in 1382; in which we have seen them described as persons affecting peculiar sanctity

and simplicity of manners, and making the fairs and markets through the kingdom, as well as the churches and church-yards, the scene of their *irregular* ministrations. Most *irregular* they unquestionably were ; for they were performed in open disregard of ecclesiastical authority. None of these zealous men ever thought it necessary to obtain the sanction of a licence from his ordinary ; and, with all of them, *itinerancy* was the very life and soul of their vocation. By their itinerant labours, it will be recollected, the Mendicant Orders had, for a time, achieved wonders in reviving the torpid faith of Europe, or, at least, in rekindling her fidelity to the visible head of the Church upon earth. It might, therefore, very naturally occur to a reformer, that the instrument, which accomplished so much for the cause of superstition, might profitably be employed in the service of reformation. Accordingly, towards the latter part of his life, the kingdom was traversed, nearly from one end of it to the other, by a multitude of preachers, under the sanction and encouragement of Wiclit. They imitated the Friars in their vagrant mode of life, in their incessant activity, and in their professed renunciation of all worldly pomp and superfluity ; and, though they did not solicit contributions from house to house, they, undoubtedly, relied for their support on the voluntary bounty of their hearers.

A full exposition of the habits and principles of these effective auxiliaries is given us by Wiclit himself in his treatise, “ Why Poor Priests have no *benefices*,” and, consequently, why they have no fixed or stationary duties. In this tract, three principal reasons

are assigned for their adopting this mode of advancing
1. Their dread of the cause of scriptural truth. Of these
simony. reasons, the *first* is, their dread of si-
mony. No man, it is alleged, could, in those days, obtain a benefice, without making certain payments, or submitting to certain conditions, which, as they imagined, gave a most unholy and mercenary character to the appointment. The prelate had his demand for first-fruits; and his officers had their demand for fees and gratuities; and to acquiesce in such extortions, as a condition of being allowed to exercise their ministry, was conceived to be, in spirit, grossly simoniacal. The exactions of the lay-patron, it seems, would often be of a still more degrading nature: for, the nominee, on accepting his benefice, would be expected to violate his sacred character by descending to the performance of some worldly office, for the gratification or the profit of his benefactor. To pay for their promotion by such a desecration of themselves, they regarded as simony of the very deepest dye. The poor priests, therefore, finding the path to preferment so fearfully beset by sin, felt themselves constrained by conscience to the exercise of an irregular and unlicensed ministry.

2 Their fear of Another of their scruples arose from
“mis-spending the goods of poor their extreme apprehension of “mis-
men.” spending the goods of poor men.” Every portion of clerical emolument that might remain, after supplying the most moderate exigencies of nature, was regarded by them as the rightful patrimony of the indigent; whereas, the usages of those days, as they affirmed, compelled the clergy to waste this sacred residue on the rich, the worthless, and the

idle. The rapacity of patrons and prelates, and ecclesiastical functionaries, together with the custom of prodigal entertainment and luxurious living, swallowed up the resources of charity : and, if any one should affect more simple and frugal habits, he was sure to be harassed by every form of calumny and molestation. Besides, the parochial clergy were frequently converted by the hierarchy into instruments for pillaging the poor. They were perpetually wearied and degraded by the letters of their ordinaries, commanding them to wring money from the hard hands of their necessitous congregations, by the terrors of ecclesiastical censure and anathema, and thus to become the ministers of avarice and extortion. “ So many cursed deceits,” exclaims Wiclid, “ hath Anti-Christ brought up by his worldly clerks, to make curates mis-spend poor men’s goods, and not truly to do their office ; or else, to forsake all, and to leave the clerks of Anti-Christ as lords of this world, to rob the people by feigned censures, and to teach the lore of the fiend, both by open preaching, and the example of an accursed life.” Abuses such as these, in the judgment of Wiclid and his disciples, were sufficient, of themselves, to convert non-conformity almost into a positive obligation.

They had yet another motive for de- ^{3. That priests} clining preferment: but it was of a ^{preach, whether} much more questionable description ^{beneficed or not.} than the former. They maintained that the want of a benefice afforded no dispensation from the duty of preaching. They had, as they contended, a sort of roving commission, which authorized and required them to be instant, in season and out of season,

wherever they might help their brethren heavenward, whether by their teaching, their prayers, or their example. Their charge they maintained to be as general as the mission of Christ and his apostles ! They were free to fly from one city to another, "when persecuted by the clerks of Anti-Christ," conformably to the injunctions of Christ himself. Without the challenge of any human authority or jurisdiction, they might dwell wherever their ministry would be most profitable, and for such time as might be convenient, "*after the moving of the Holy Ghost* ;" and the example of Christ and his apostles was better observed by living on the voluntary alms of their followers, than in receiving tithes or offerings, conformably to the customs ordained by sinful men. "For these dreads," he says, "and for a thousand more, and for to be more like Christ and his apostles, and more to profit their own souls, and other men's, some poor priests think, with God, to travel about where they shall most profit, and by the evidence that God giveth them, while they have time, and a little bodily strength and youth." We have here the principles of a complete system of itinerancy, subject to no other controul whatever, except the supposed direction of the Holy Spirit, and entirely independent of all human superintendence or authority. On the manifold evils that might result from such a system, if divested of all qualification, it must be quite needless to enlarge. Such qualification, however, Wiclif conceived himself to supply, in the declaration, that neither he, nor his poor priests, presumed to condemn curates who do well their office, and dwell where they shall most profit, and teach, truly and stably, the law

of God, against false prophets, and the accursed deceptions of the fiend." It would appear, therefore, that in some respects, he might be styled the Wesley of his day. He did not, it is true, itinerate himself; neither does it appear that he encouraged laymen to take upon themselves the office of public religious instruction. But he gave his express and deliberate sanction to the practice of itinerancy and field preaching, though without pretending to supersede the regular and faithful ministrations of the parochial clergy. In one particular, indeed, he had clearly the advantage of Wesley. The modern Reformer lived in times when the law and practice of the established Church gave no countenance to this species of missionary proceeding. Whereas Wiclif had constantly before his eyes the phenomenon of itinerant mendicancy; and might, therefore, think himself excused for wishing to convert to salutary purposes, an usage, which had the avowed sanction of Christ's vicar upon earth.

It is to be charitably hoped that the generality of these persons had counted the cost of their irregular warfare. It must, however, be confessed that, if we were to estimate their firmness by the example of several among them, respecting whom some distinct account has been preserved, we might be strongly tempted to doubt whether they went forth to their work in the genuine spirit of martyrdom. Of these reforming missionaries, John Aston was one of the most energetic and untiring. John Aston. He seems to have been the very model of a poor itinerant priest. He is described as one who had nearly shaken off all the incumbrances of the flesh.

He travelled on foot, with his staff in his hand. He was in continual circuit among all the parishes in every part of the kingdom. He scarcely ever suffered the need of refreshment to interfere with the prosecution of his labours. He is, accordingly, compared by the chronicler, Knighton, to a bee perpetually on the wing ; or to a hound, in constant readiness to start up from his repose, and to bark at the slightest sound. It further appears that he was not content with publishing the conclusions of his master, but added a multitude of novelties of his own coinage : and, like most of his brethren, he affirmed that the *poor priests* were the only true preachers, and that all the rest of the clergy were preachers of falsehood¹. This man was among those followers of Wiclit, who were summoned before Archbishop Courtney, at the synod of the Preaching Friars ; and his demeanour on that occasion was remarkable for its boldness and pertinacity. He was repeatedly urged by the primate to address the court in Latin, lest his statements should convey error, or excitement, to the minds of the ignorant bystanders. With this injunction he positively refused to comply. On the contrary, he addressed the auditors in English, with so much vehemence, that it was thought expedient to hasten the proceedings, and without further delay, to pronounce against him the sentence of excommunication². From a sturdy evangelist like this, one might, perhaps, be prepared to expect a stern defiance of ecclesiastical censure. Nevertheless, it appears that the

¹ Knighton, p. 2568, 2569.

² Wilk. Cone. p. 164.

terrors of persecution were, after all, too much for his courage. It is affirmed, indeed, by William Thorpe, in the course of his examination before Archbishop Arundel, in 1407, that this John Aston taught the doctrine of Wiclif, "and used it himself right perfectly to his life's end³." But it is difficult to reconcile this assertion with one undoubted fact; namely, that by the letters of the archbishop, dated November 27, 1382, he was restored to the school exercises, in consideration of his having renounced and anathematized his heretical opinions⁴. The conclusion, therefore, seems inevitable, that he once retreated most unworthily from the position, which he maintained at first with so much intrepidity. Of his recovery we have no other intimation, except that which may possibly be implied in the above assertion of Thorpe's.

Another of Wiclif's distinguished coadjutors was John Purney, or Purvey. This man, as we are informed by Knighton, was of a grave aspect, affecting an appearance of sanctity beyond his fellows. His dress was that of an ordinary person. He was wholly regardless of his ease, and unweared in journeying through the land, for the purpose of enlightening and converting the people. He was, indeed, the personal friend and companion of Wiclif; and was passionately devoted to the work of a reformer. In his sermons, he is said to have assailed with the deadliest detraction all preachers but those of his own sect; and, more espe-

John Purney.

³ Wordsw. Eccl. Biography, vol. i. p. 132.

⁴ Wilk. Conc. p. 169. Lewis, c. x. p. 262—266.

cially, those of the Mendicant Order. His vehemence and boldness brought upon him, at length, the weight of the ecclesiastical arm. He was seized, and cruelly tortured, by order of Archbishop Arundel. His faith was unequal to the trial ; and he pronounced his recantation at Paul's Cross in 1396⁵. The rest of his story is deplorable enough. The archbishop rewarded his *repentance* with a benefice ; and the following is the language in which that prelate afterwards spoke of him to William Thorpe⁶. “Thou, and such other losels of thy sect, would shave your beards full neere, for to have a benefice. For, by Jesu, I know none more covetous shrews then ye are, when that ye have a benefice. For lo ! I gave to *John Purvey* a benefice but a mile out of this castle (Saltwood) : and I heard more complaints about his covetousness for tithes, and other misdoings, then I did of all the men that were advanced within my diocese⁷.” All this Thorpe was unable to deny. Whether Purvey lived to repent of his retractation, is uncertain. It appears, however, not altogether unlikely ; for he was a second time imprisoned by Archbishop Chichely in 1421, and probably died in confinement⁸.

William Swinderby was another of these preachers. He was called by the people, William the Hermit. He is represented

⁵ Wilk. Conc. vol. iii. p. 260.

⁶ See “the Examination of William Thorpe, penned with his own hand,” Wordsw. Eccl. Biogr. vol. i. p. 130.

⁷ Ibid. 203, 204.

⁸ Lewis, c. x. p. 267—270.

by Knighton as a man of inconstant temper, and unsettled habits. He first signalized himself at Leicester, by a somewhat rash and perilous assault upon the pride and vanity of women. His ungracious freedom of speech excited the wrath of all the females in the place, both good and bad, to such a degree, that they were ready to stone him out of the town. He next attacked the merchants, and nearly drove some of them to despair, by declaring that no rich man could enter the kingdom of heaven. He then, for a time, became a recluse, and was enabled to indulge his passion for solitude, by the bounty of the Duke of Lancaster, who allowed him a house within his park, and provided him with a maintenance. Growing weary of total seclusion, he was taken into the abbey for a time : but his fondness for itinerancy soon returned, and forced him out, once more, to a conflict with the corruptions of the world, in company with one W. Smith, a deformed blacksmith, who was driven by a disappointment in love to habits of ascetic moroseness. His denunciations were now levelled against the enormities of the Church, a theme which was sure to find him an abundance of willing hearers. When Bokyngham, Bishop of Lincoln, attempted to restrain him, he made a pulpit of two mill-stones, in the high-street of that city, from which he proclaimed that, *in spite of the Pope's teeth, he could and would preach in the king's highway, so long as he had the good will of the people.* He was preserved from the full severity of punishment, which otherwise would have awaited him, by the intercession of the Duke of Lancaster ; but was, nevertheless, compelled to abjure his conclusions. Being deeply depressed by the

disgrace of his retraction, he fled to Coventry, resumed his former habits, and was recovering his popularity; when he was expelled by the diocesan with shame and contempt. This is the substance of Knighton's account. One fact is added to it by Walsingham, which, if credited, may help to explain Swinderby's escape from worse consequences; namely, that when the Bishop of Lincoln had made preparations to correct him, the multitude raged so violently as to frighten the bishop, and to deter him from further proceedings against the heretic⁹.

It must be acknowledged, that the picture, here presented to us, of a poor travelling priest, is very far from honourable to that class of agitators. It exhibits a combination of rashness and inconstancy, which might have reflected discredit on the very best of causes. It is true that the above narrative,—like every other recital of the monkish annalists, when the Lollards are their theme,—must be received with very considerable caution. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the account of William Swinderby, preserved to us by Fox, is scarcely more creditable to his fortitude, than that of the Popish chronicler. In perusing the details, indeed, in Knighton and in Fox, we seem to be reading the histories of two different men. In the martyrologist,—whose authority is the Episcopal Register of Hereford,—we find abundant complaints against him, for “perverting the whole Ecclesiastical State, and stirring up schism between the clergy and the people;” but not one syllable of his fanatical proceedings at Leicester. The substance

⁹ Lewis, c. x. p. 271—276.

of what is told us by Fox is simply this. In 1389, William Swinderby, priest, was presented before the Bishop of Lincoln, upon certain articles, in which—as he afterwards complained—his real opinions were maliciously distorted. His accusers were Mendicants, and so hotly did they long for his destruction, that they brought dry wood with them into the town to burn him: and here Fox, undoubtedly, agrees with Knighton, in stating, that his fears compelled him to abjuration. He then removed to the diocese of Hereford. But his old enemies, the friars, were still about his path: and the consequence was, that, in 1391, he was summoned to answer before the Bishop of Hereford, upon the charge of holding heretical opinions, and of preaching without the licence of the bishop, and in defiance of his injunction. On his appearance, he was allowed further time to prepare his answer, which he accordingly did, in the form of a written protest, and exposition of his doctrines: but it seems that he had the prudence to decline any further appearance in person. Sentence was, hereupon, pronounced in due form against him, as a heretic, schismatic, and false informer of the people; and all persons were solemnly admonished, under pain of the law, that they should neither receive, defend, nor support him, until he should be reconciled to the Church. Against this sentence he appealed to the king in council; and presented, at the same time, what Fox calls “a fruitful letter to the lords and burgesses of parliament.” This exhortation, or homily, is little more than a string of scriptural sentences and passages, in condemnation of

the manifold obliquities and corruptions of the age. Of the fate of "this worthy priest, and true servant of Christ," as he is styled by the martyrologist, no account has been preserved: though Fox conjectures, upon very slight and insufficient grounds, that he was burnt in Smithfield, at the beginning of the next reign¹.

It is a relief to turn from these very equivocal specimens of non-conformity, to the case of William Thorpe, whose character and life, as a "poor priest," reflected signal credit on the cause to which he devoted himself. Thorpe was destined by his parents for the sacerdotal office: and no expense, within their means, was spared in his preparation for it. Being smitten, however, with certain scruples, he hesitated to take upon himself the sacred responsibility, until he had consulted several wise and virtuous priests, and among them Hereford and Repingdon, who had not then fallen away from their fidelity: and finding that "their honest and charitable works passed the fame which he heard of them," he resolved to join them in their pious labours. And, not only was he "right homely"² with these men, "and communed with them long time and oft," but he, also, sought the truth at the lips of their great master himself, John Wiclif, who, he says, was "holden of full many men the greatest clerk that they knew then living, and, withal, a passing *ruly*³ man, and innocent in his living: for which reason, great men communed oft

¹ Fox, Vol. i. p. 530—542.

² Familiar.

³ Sedate, orderly.

with him, and they so loved his learning, that they wrote it, and busily enforced them to rule themselves thereafter." Being thus captivated with the teaching and the character of Wiclid, he devoted himself, for more than thirty years, to the work of spreading the knowledge he had attained through various parts of England, but more especially in the northern counties. At last the hand of ecclesiastical discipline seized upon him. He was imprisoned in 1407 at Saltwood Castle, in Kent; and, on his examination before Archbishop Arundel, at that place, maintained his cause with modest, but inflexible, constancy. His own account of this examination is still preserved, and is among the most interesting documents in the earlier history of our Reformation⁴. The end of this worthy confessor is not known; though it seems most probable that he closed his days in prison.

The part of the examination with which we are more immediately concerned, is that which relates to the duty of preaching. When the archbishop reproached him with holding that he might lawfully preach without authority of any bishop, his reply was, that by the authority of God's law, and also of saints and doctors, he was taught that it was the priest's office to preach *busily*, freely, and truly, the word of God; that no man should take the priesthood upon him without a hearty good-will to preach, or without competent learning for the work; and that he who became a priest, was under the most awful obligation to make known the law of God to

⁴ It is printed from Fox, in Wordsworth's Eccl. Biogr. vol. i. p. 111—212.

his people, *when, where, and to whom* he best might. The archbishop then pressed him with the question of St. Paul, *how shall priests preach except they be sent?* and added, that “he never sent Thorpe to preach ; for his venomous doctrine was so well known throughout England, that no bishop would grant him a licence.” On this Thorpe replied, that he well knew that no licence would be granted to him, or any of his brethren, without such terms and conditions as those which were imposed upon the friars, and such other preachers ; and to these limitations they could not in conscience submit. “And, therefore,” he added, “though we have not your letter, sir, nor letters of any other bishops, written with ink upon parchment, we dare not therefore leave the office of preaching ; to which preaching, all priests, after their cunning and power are bound by divers testimonies of God’s law, and great doctors, *without any mention-making of bishops’ letters.* For that God commandeth us to do the office of priesthood, *he will be our sufficient letters and witness,* if we by example of his holy living and teaching, specially occupy us faithfully, to do our office justly : yea, the people to whom we preach, be they faithful or unfaithful, shall be our letters, that is, our witness-bearers ; for the truth, where it is sown, may not be unwitnessed.”

Notions like these were clearly subversive of all ecclesiastical discipline whatever. It can, therefore, hardly be a subject of wonder, or even of blame, that the prelates should be extremely anxious for their suppression. The rack and the stake, indeed, were most execrable instruments for the maintenance of conformity ; but these, though but rarely known

in this country, had long been familiar to the spiritual judicatures of the continent; and it could scarcely be expected that the English hierarchy, in that barbarous age, should be more scrupulous in the use of them, than their brother inquisitors abroad, when once the legislature had been prevailed upon to sanction such inhuman extremities.

It may be convenient to introduce in this place the mention of several other persons, who, though they cannot properly be numbered among the “poor priests” of Wiclif, were yet, at one time, most strenuous auxiliaries in the cause of Reformation, and like some others named above, abandoned it in time of persecution. Among these, Nicolas Hereford. one of the most distinguished was Nicolas Hereford, above alluded to by Thorpe. He was a doctor of divinity, of Queen’s College, Oxford, eminent as a scholar and a divine, and for a while, a zealous supporter of the new doctrines. He was, accordingly, summoned to answer at the Preaching Friars, before Archbishop Courtney, was excommunicated for contumacy in not appearing, but afterwards restored, in consideration of his subsequent obedience to the summons, and his abjuration of the erroneous opinions imputed to him⁵. It is affirmed by Knighton, that he, subsequently, went to Rome, with a view to defend these same conclusions, and was, eventually, committed to perpetual imprisonment by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Others maintain, that being wearied out with persecution, he finally submitted, and ended his days in the habit of a

⁵ Wilk. Conc. iii. p. 169.

Carthusian, at the monastery of St. Anne, Coventry. Our own records give a very different account of his fate. By them it appears that, in 1394, the king conferred upon him the Chancellorship of the Church at Hereford ; which perfectly agrees with what is said of him in Thorpe's examination ; where he is spoken of, together with Purvey and Philip Repingdon, as having renounced all heretical opinions, and accepted preferment in the Church⁶.

Philip Repingdon. Philip Repingdon, also mentioned above, was another of those who were convened at the Preaching Friars. He was one of the Canons, and afterwards Abbot, of Leicester ; and had vehemently maintained all the opinions of Wiclit before the University of Oxford. Whether his fidelity faded away before the fear of suffering, or the hope of advancement, or whether he was impelled by an honest change of opinion,—we are not informed. It is a fact, however, that he not only abandoned the cause of Reformation, but became one of its bitterest persecutors. In 1405 he was promoted to the bishopric of Lincoln, conferred on him by Papal provision ; and in 1420, was advanced to the dignity of a cardinal⁷.

Among the deserters from the doctrine of Wiclit was Richard Fleming, the founder of Lincoln College, Oxford. After he had proceeded to his master's degree, he became notorious, at the University, for his zealous patronage

⁶ For a full account of Hereford, see Lewis, c. x. p. 256—262.

⁷ Lewis, c. x. p. 266, 267.

of the reformed opinions, and actually appeared as their defender in the public schools. One would gladly be persuaded that the subsequent counter-revolution in his principles, was the result of conviction, and that his integrity did not sink under the weight of his Church preferments. The change of his conduct, whatever may have been the cause of it, was as complete as the most vehement sincerity could have produced. His enmity to the heretical notions was quite as decided as his support of them had ever been. His noble foundation is, itself, a monument at least of the strength of his hostility ; for it was expressly designed by him for the education of adversaries to the doctrines of the Reformer. In 1396 he was one of the twelve censors, appointed by the University, for the examination of Wiclit's writings. In 1420 he was promoted to the see of Lincoln ; and would, afterwards, have been translated by the Pope to that of York, if the king had not refused his consent. It has already been stated, that it was this Richard Fleming, who, as bishop of this diocese, was charged with the disinterment of Wiclit's remains, in pursuance of the decree of the Council of Constance ; an office which he executed with so much good will, that he caused the bones of the heretic to be burned, and the ashes to be cast into the waters of the Swift. He died in January, 1430, and was buried in his own cathedral⁸.

It would be useless to mention several other names, comparatively obscure, which brought similar discredit on the cause of Wiclit. But whatever may

⁸ Lewis, c. x. p. 279, 280.

Wide dispersion
of Wiclit's prin-
ciples.

have been the frailty, or the unfaithfulness, of some among his emissaries, it must always be remembered, that, when the bitterest hour of persecution arrived, multitudes among his followers were found faithful unto death. With regard to his "poor priests," at least, the *weariness and painfulness* of their exertions is beyond all dispute. By their incessant labours, his principles were so widely dispersed, that, as Knighton affirms, "they were multiplied, like suckers from the root of a tree, and every where filled the compass of the kingdom; insomuch that a man could not meet two people on the road, but one of them was a disciple of Wiclit's." The character ascribed to them, generally, by the Popish chronicler, is, as might be expected, much more honourable to their activity, than to their wisdom or their piety. He speaks of them as wordy and disputatious; out-talking all who ventured to contend with them; and exhibiting a wonderful agreement in opinion among themselves. He even charges them with a *Saracenic* pugnacity, abhorrent from the meekness and patience which become the followers of Christ; and declares that they were rather suspected of being disciples of Mahomet, who forbade his followers to argue for his law, and ordered them to fight for it. The preachers of Wiclit's opinions, he affirms, were usually guarded by their hearers, armed with sword and target for their defence, that no one might attempt any thing against them, or their blasphemous doctrines⁹. Now, that the Reformists

⁹ Knighton, 2661—2665.

were often violent, noisy, and pertinacious, and often most abundantly lacking in discretion, may very easily be imagined. But in order to estimate rightly the charge of resorting to carnal weapons, we must carry back our thoughts into the fourteenth century ; a period when society was rude and turbulent, and when the omnipresence of the law was not felt, as it is now. Even in the eighteenth century, the lives of Wesley and of Whitfield were sometimes in danger from the passions of the mob. It can, therefore, hardly be surprising that the followers of Wiclit should have been impelled, between 300 and 400 years earlier, to guard themselves against violence from whatever quarter it might arise. Besides, there is little doubt that the Lollard congregations were not unfrequently attended by worshipful knights and squires, whose very costume was in those days partially warlike. So that it would be unfair to infer from circumstances like these, that Wiclit was the patriarch of rebellion, or that Lollardism was, from the first, an institute of revolution.

It has been asserted, by Varillas and others, that the seditious fanatic, John Balle, was a disciple and emissary of Wiclit, or, in other words, one of his *poor priests*.

The fanatic John Balle, not a disciple of Wiclit.

This assertion, however, is destitute of evidence. That the opinions scattered by this fanatic had some resemblance to those of Wiclit and his followers, may be true ; but, that he had any connection with Wiclit, has never been shown. Nothing can be more certain than the fact, that he had fallen under the censures of Archbishop Langham, as a preacher of

manifold and scandalous errors in the year 1366¹, long before the poor priests of Wiclit had been heard of. And Walsingham expressly affirms, that, for upwards of twenty years, previous to the rebellion of the peasantry, he had been busily plying the trade of revolutionary agitation². By Knighton he is accordingly styled, not the follower, but the forerunner of Wiclit, as John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ. As for the insurrection of the peasantry, Walsingham ascribes it, among various other causes, to the prevalence of religious mendicancy. The

The insurrection of the peasantry, falsely ascribed to Wiclit and his followers.

professors of poverty, he complains, (forgetful of the principles of the Order, and lusting after the wealth which they had renounced) had shamefully pandered to the bad passions both of high and low ; and all with a view to the accumulation of riches. And this assertion is powerfully supported by the confession of the demagogue Jack Straw, immediately before his execution. According to his statement, the design of the insurgents was to exterminate all *possessors*, bishops, monks, canons, and rectors of churches : and the only ecclesiastics to be spared, were, *not* the emissaries of Wiclit, but the begging friars ! These alone would have been suffered to live, as being amply sufficient for all the purposes of religious ministration³. That the followers of the

¹ Wilk. Conc. iii. 64.

² Wals. p. 292.

³ "Qui in paupertate perseverare juraverant, dicunt bonum malum, et malum bonum, seducetnes principes adulacionibus, plebem mendaciis, et utrosque secum in devium pertra-

Reformer were among the instigators of this commotion, is rendered further improbable, by the remarkable circumstance, that his great patron, John of Gaunt, was one chief object of the fury of the insurgents. They not only fired his palace, and destroyed his furniture, but actually sought his life. It is also perfectly notorious, that the Commons, (although they concurred in advising the repeal of the charters of general manumission, extorted from the king by the insurgent villains) ascribed the insurrection wholly to the intolerable burdens laid upon the kingdom, by the prodigality of the court. "To speak the real truth," they say, "the injuries lately done to the poor commons, *more than they ever suffered before*, caused them to rise, and to commit the mischief done in their late riot: and there is still cause to fear greater evil, if sufficient remedy be not timely provided⁴." It is not, indeed, to be supposed that the language of reformation, however reasonable or moderate, would much tend to strengthen the endurance of the people under these oppressions. But this is a very insufficient reason for representing Wiclid and his travelling preachers as conspirators against the peace and welfare of the realm.

Having, above, considered the various resources derived by the cause of reformation, from the energy of Wiclid himself, and from the activity and zeal of

hentes."—Wals. p. 281. "Soli *mendicantes* vixissent super terram, qui suffecissent pro sacris celebrandis, et conferendis, universæ terræ."—Wals. p. 283.

⁴ Rot. Parl. 5 Rich. II. p. 100, cited in Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 93, 94.

his followers, it is fit that we should survey the external and accidental advantages, which accrued to the same cause, from the influence and patronage of the great. The foregoing narrative

Encouragement afforded to Wiclit by the great.

of the Reformer drew down no unfavourable looks from the *high places* of the land, so long as those aggressions were confined to abuses, which brought the ecclesiastical and secular interests into conflict with each other. The amount of encouragement and security thus obtained, will be best estimated from an enumeration of the distinguished persons, who are represented as propitious to the views of the Reformer. At the head of those dis-

Edward III. distinguished persons, it is usual to reckon that illustrious sovereign, Edward the

Third ; who, for the countenance afforded by him to so dangerous a character, has been consigned, by some historians, to the severest displeasure of heaven. Bodily sickness, mental decline, and an inglorious old age, if we may credit those writers, were the just retribution received by him at the hand of God. That this sovereign formed a high estimate of Wiclit's talents and accomplishments, there can be no doubt ; for he employed him in matters of great national importance, involving his own royal prerogative and the best interests of his kingdom : but he, probably, was quite unconscious that, in so doing, he had called down the divine wrath upon his head. With the varieties of theological opinion, the monarch did but slightly trouble himself ; and in Wiclit he found, what the exigencies of his affairs required, not a desperate heresiarch, but an able servant and an

enlightened counsellor. It is, however, undeniable, that the confidence of his sovereign must have invested the Reformer with a dignity and an authority, highly favourable to the advancement of his principles and opinions.

It is further indisputable, that Johanna, Queen Johanna, Queen Dowager. hanna, the widow of the Black Prince, was deeply interested for the honour and the personal safety of Wiclf; for, it will be recollected, that it was her peremptory injunction, delivered by her messenger, Sir Lewis Clifford, which arrested the hand of ecclesiastical power, when it was ready to fall upon him, in the synod at Lambeth.

How Wiclf was supported by John of Gaunt, must already have fully appeared. It has been supposed that the monkish historians have testified their sense of the duke's delinquency in this matter, by representing him as little better than a traitorous conspirator. It would be difficult to estimate the truth of these imputations. "We cannot hope," as the historian of the middle ages has observed, "to disentangle the intrigues of that remote age, as to which our records are of no service, and the chroniclers are very slightly informed⁵." It is more to our present purpose to remark, that the motives of the duke for patronizing the cause of reform, were, in all probability, more of a political than a religious complexion. It is true, that he vigorously resisted the attempt which was made in 1390, to deprive the people of their English translation of the Scriptures, declaring, with a mighty

John of Gaunt.

⁵ Hallam, vol. iii. p. 96.

oath, that he would maintain their right to read the law of their faith in their own language, “against those, whoever they might be, who brought in the bill :” and his protestation was acutely seconded by the arguments of other speakers, who contended, that if the existing amount of error were to determine the expediency of suppressing translations, the Latin vulgate would, of all others, deserve prohibition, “seeing that the decretals reckoned no fewer than sixty-six Latin heretics⁶.” But then, on the other hand, we have also seen, that when the dispute between Wiclid and the Church became more strictly theological than before, the favour of the duke instantly began to wane. He had set his face against the more secular tyranny of Rome ; but had no inclination whatever to commit himself to a conflict with her spiritual supremacy, relative to mere matters of belief. It cannot, however, be questioned, that whatever may have been his motives, his protection was, on the whole, a tower of strength to the cause of the reformers.

Anne, the queen of Richard II. From the character transmitted to us of Anne of Bohemia, the queen of Richard II. it may safely be concluded, that the progress of Scriptural truth was regarded by her with fervid interest. This excellent and amiable lady was the daughter of the emperor Charles IV. and sister to Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia ; and her whole life and habits, in this country, were such as gave an honourable and effective sanction to the most important of Wiclid's labours. “ The noble

⁶ Lewis, c. x. p. 240.

Queen of England," says he⁷, "the sister of Cæsar, may hear the Gospel written in three languages, Bohemian, German, and Latin; and to *heretigate* her, on this account, would be Luciferian folly!" There appeared, indeed, but little disposition to *heretigate* her, on the part of the hierarchy. On the contrary, her scriptural studies formed one leading topic of commendation, in the sermon delivered at her funeral, by Archbishop Arundel. "Although she was a stranger," he said, "yet she constantly studied the four Gospels in English, with the expositions of the doctors: and in the study of these, and in the perusal of godly books, she was more diligent than the prelates themselves, although their office and calling required it⁸." This may be thought a somewhat strange and hazardous encomium, from the mouth of the Romish primate of all England. But it may easily be imagined, that in his judgment, it was one thing to sanction the use of the Scriptures among persons of education and rank, (especially when guarded by orthodox commentaries), and another, to throw open the sacred oracles to rash and self-sufficient ignorance. Besides, the prelate would probably have been rather more parsimonious in his praise, could he have foreseen, that certain of her majesty's attendants would, on the death of their mistress, carry back with them the writings and the principles of Wiclif to their native country, Bohemia, and would thus assist to scatter the seeds of reformation, more widely than ever, over the continent of Europe.

⁷ In his *Threefold Bond of Love*.

⁸ Lewis, c. x. p. 242.

Richard II. With regard to King Richard himself, it would, perhaps, be idle to predicate of him, either attachment or opposition to the views of Wiclit. When he came to the throne, he was merely an “intoxicated boy.” As he grew up to manhood, the better elements of his nature were lost and dissipated amidst the gaieties of his prodigal court, while its worse qualities developed themselves into a disastrous maturity. In a character like this, it would be vain to look for any decided views relative to questions connected with the state of the national religion. All that can be said of him is, that in the early period of his reign, he manifested no positive aversion to the person or the principles of Wiclit; and that the persecuting ordinance above alluded to, was rather the work of the hierarchy, than of the king himself. It was not till the year 1395, that the audacity of the Lollards awakened him to a decisive manifestation of his own displeasure at their proceedings.

Among the nobility and gentry of England, both Wiclit and his followers found many zealous and steady friends. It will be remembered that, when he first appeared before the prelates at St. Paul’s, he

Various noble- was attended, not only by the Duke of men and knights. Lancaster, but by Henry Percy, Earl of Derby, and Earl Marshal of England. In one of his homilies, he declares that he had great comfort of certain knights, that they favoured the Gospel, and were disposed to read it in English⁹. Of these,

⁹ Lewis, c. x. p. 244.

several have been mentioned by the chroniclers¹, together with dukes and earls, who, “having a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, surrounded the false preachers with a military band, that they might not suffer reproaches or losses by the orthodox, on account of their profane doctrine.” Of these noble persons, Sir John Oldcastle, otherwise Lord Cobham. Lord Cobham, is, perhaps, the most conspicuous. It is probable that he was a hearer of Wiclif himself, in his youth. Most certainly he was a strenuous supporter of his opinions, which he not only intrepidly maintained, but actively disseminated. When he was brought to answer before the archbishop and clergy, at the house of the Dominican Friars in London, he bore the following testimony to the excellence of his master’s doctrine: “As for that virtuous man, Wiclif, whose judgments ye so highly disdain, I shall say here, of my part, both before God and man, that before I knew that despised doctrine of his, I never abstained from sin. But since I learned therein to fear my Lord God, it hath, otherwise, I trust, been with me. So much grace could I never find in your instructions;”—all which provoked the following reply from Dr. Walden, prior of the Carmelites: “It were not well with me, if I had no grace to amend till I heard the devil preach! St. Hierome saith, that he which seeketh such suspected masters, shall not find the mid-day light, but

¹ The names mentioned by Knighton, are Sir Thomas Latimer, Sir Lewis Clifford, (the same who brought the queen dowager’s message to the prelates at Lambeth) Sir John Pecche, Sir Richard Story, or Sturry, Sir Reginald Hilton, and Sir John Trussel.

the mid-day devil." The final result of all these proceedings is well known, and needs not to be recited here. It must suffice to state that, unhappily, Lord Cobham is supposed to have been more or less involved in certain proceedings of a factious and even treasonable character against his sovereign, whose confidential friend and brother in arms he had once been : and that eventually he was condemned to be burnt as a heretic, and hanged as a traitor².

² See Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, vol. i. 217—227. Also, Southey's Book of the Church, vol. i. p. 358.

Since the appearance of the first edition of this volume, the case of Lord Cobham has been very carefully and dispassionately investigated by the Rev. J. Endell Tyler, in his Memoirs of Henry V. London, 1838, vol. ii. p. 348—392 : a work which should, by all means, be consulted for this passage of history. The tale, however, is still full of perplexity ; and, in all probability, must ever remain so. Mr. Tyler has called our attention more particularly to the following inexplicable circumstance in the story :—In a conference with the King, Lord Cobham declared that, as for the Pope, and his spirituality, he owed them neither suit nor service : forasmuch as he knew him (the Pope) to be the great Antichrist, the son of Perdition, the open adversary of God, the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place : and, he added, that the King was his supreme head, liege lord, and competent judge, and no other. And yet, it is said that afterwards, in the presence of the King, he peremptorily appealed to the Pope ; and laid before his majesty a written document to that effect ! It is true that his master, Wiclif himself, had appealed to the pope against his deposition from the wardenship of Canterbury Hall. But this was on a mere question of right : and, besides, it happened some seven-and-forty years earlier, in 1367 ; at which period Wiclif may, possibly, have been somewhat less confident, than he afterwards became, that the Pope was Antichrist. Whereas, here, we find the confirmed and stubborn Lollard, when charged with heresy,

It appears, therefore, beyond question, that Wiclif numbered among his followers not only the poor, the weak, and the ignorant, but numbers of high-born and enlightened men. That dangerous and turbulent elements mixed themselves up in the commotions produced by better principles, it would be idle to deny. But such, unhappily, are the conditions under which our fallen humanity is often doomed to receive the most inestimable blessings which it may please a gracious Providence to bestow. It becomes us, therefore, to be deeply thankful for whatever good may have been elicited from the conflict, and to labour, with all our faculties, for its preservation.

appealing to the great Antichrist, the son of perdition, the open adversary of God ! If, indeed, the appeal was merely an artifice of delay, it was scarcely worthy of so brave and honest a man.

CHAPTER XI.

Proceedings against the Wyclifites—Petition to Parliament on the part of the Lollards—Turbulence of the Lollards—King Richard II. requested to return from Ireland to the Succour of the Church—He returns accordingly, and menaces the patrons of Lollardism—Letter of Pope Boniface IX.—Certain positions of Wyclif condemned at Oxford—Statute de Heretico Comburendo—Proceedings of Archbishop Arundel—Continued violence of the Lollards—Law compelling all persons in civil office to take an oath against Lollardism—Inquisitorial Constitution of Archbishop Chicheley—Effect of these severities—Bishop Peacock writes against the Lollards—He defends the Bishops—His “Repressor”—His “Treatise of Faith”—He censures the preaching of the Mendicants—He maintains the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and questions the prudence of relying on the infallibility of the Church—For these opinions he is forbidden the King’s presence, and expelled from the House of Lords—He is convened before the Archbishop for heresy—Abjures—Is imprisoned for life in Thorney Abbey—Persecution of the Lollards renewed under Henry VII.—Martyrdom of Joanna Baughton—Martyrdom of Tylsworth—Bishop Nix—Inhumanity towards those who abjured—These cruelties eventually injurious to the Papacy in England.

AFTER the death of Wyclif, the mighty waters which he had let loose continued to flow onward, with a stream continually more impetuous and more turbid. Their strength was, unhappily, increased by many a tributary torrent, which mingled its impurities with their tide : till, at length, deep began to call on deep,

with a voice so fearful, that the Church called passionately for the assistance of the State, in arresting the progress of the deluge, and saving the realm at once from pollution and devastation.

The work of embankment against it
 was vigorously prosecuted shortly after
 Wiclif's removal. In 1388, a com-
 mission was issued to certain individuals, for the
 seizure of all the "little books" and tracts of the
 heresiarch and his auxiliaries. This commission was
 fortified with a power to make proclamation, in the
 king's name, forbidding to all persons, of whatever
 degree, on pain of imprisonment and forfeiture, the
 use of those pernicious writings, or the support of
 the scandalous opinions which they contained. And
 in order that these precautions might be co-extensive
 with the evil, letters-patent, to the same effect, were
 addressed, at the instance of the primate, to commis-
 sioners, throughout most of the counties of England.
 In spite of these measures, the indica-
 tions continued to become more and
 more formidable; till, in 1394, they were so ap-
 palling, that it was thought needful to invoke the
 personal exercise of the royal authority. In that
 year, a petition was presented to Par-
 liament on the part of the Lollards, in
 the form of twelve conclusions, de-
 nouncing the abuses of the Church, and demanding
 its reformation, in language of greater boldness than
 had ever before been hazarded in the legislature¹.

1388.
 Proceedings
 against the Wic-
 lifites.

1394.

Petition to Parlia-
 ment on the part
 of the Lollards.

¹ This petition is printed in Wilkins, by the title of "Conclusiones Lollardorum, in quodam libello porrectæ pleno Parliamento Regis Angliæ." A.D. 1394. 18 Ric. II. Wilk. Conc. iii. p. 221.

In addition to this, if we may credit Walsingham, such was the audacity of the Lollards, that they placarded the gates of St. Paul's Cathedral, and Westminster Abbey, with factious manifestos, and outrageous accusations of the clergy². Richard was, at that time, in Ireland :

The King requested to return from Ireland, to the succour of the Church. and so pressing was the danger, that messengers were despatched to him, with the Archbishop of York and the

Bishop of London at their head, to entreat that he would hasten his return, and succour the true faith and the holy Church, which were then assailed with incredible insults and afflictions. Upon this application, his Majesty instantly repaired to

England : and finding that certain of the knighthood and nobility of the kingdom were leaders and instigators of these commotions, he summoned several into his presence, and forbade them, with the sternest menaces and rebukes, to continue their favour to the seditious Lollards. Sir Richard Stury was,

more especially, the object of the royal indignation. He was compelled to abjure the principles and tenets of these dangerous people ; and when he had done this, the king in his turn swore to him, that if ever he dared to violate his oath, he should perish, without mercy, by an ignominious death³. The faith of the king, and the zeal of the hierarchy, were further in-

Letter of Pope Boniface IX. voked by an urgent epistle from Boni- face IX. in which he called upon the Church to root out and destroy the maintainers of

² Wals. p. 388.

³ Wals. p. 388, 389

doctrines, subversive of the State, both civil and ecclesiastical, and exhorted the monarch to strengthen the hands of the clergy with all the aids of the secular authority and power.

By these manifestations of vigour, the work of open agitation was, for a time, suppressed. The vigilance, however, of Archbishop Arundel suffered no relaxation. A provincial council was held by him in 1396, in which eighteen conclusions from Wiclif's *Triologus* were condemned, and a friar by the name of Wodford was ordered to draw up an answer to them. The University of Oxford was further called upon to examine the writings of the heretic, and to certify their report thereon in the Chancery. To this injunction, that body opposed the privilege of their exempt jurisdiction; a plea which was speedily beaten down by the Royal Letters Patent, peremptorily forbidding them to rely on any such immunity. They were further threatened with a Visitation from the archbishop, who distinctly charged the whole University with heretical gravity; and thus succeeded in goading them to reluctant action. The result was, that, after some opposition, twelve delegates were despatched to the Convocation, then sitting at St. Paul's, with a long list of censurable articles extracted from the writings of the Reformer, but accompanied with the protestation that, with many, their authority was but small; and accordingly recommending these articles to the consideration of "his Excellent Paternity," with a view to their being submitted to their most holy Father, the Pope.

It would seem, however, that the hierarchy grew weary of a conflict against innovation, with the cumbersome implements of the ancient law. According to that law, the process in cases of heresy was as follows:—The person accused of heretical opinions might be cited by the archbishop to appear before him, and the other bishops and clergy, assembled in Provincial Synod or Convocation. If duly convicted, he might recall, or abjure, his error, and save his life. If, however, he afterwards relapsed into the same heresy, or fell into any other, and was again convicted before the same tribunal, his condemnation was pronounced, whether he abjured or not. And here the spiritual court professed to stop. It inflicted no temporal punishment; but merely decreed that the offender should be left to the secular arm, according to the Canonical Laws;” Holy Mother, the Church, having nothing further to do in the premises.” At this stage of the proceeding, the king might interpose his pardon, as in the case of any other criminal. If no such act of mercy was extended to the convict, the royal writ *de heretico comburendo* was issued to the sheriff, commanding him to commit the heretic to the fire, “in detestation of his crime, and to the manifest example of other Christians⁴.” With a view to simplify and accelerate the proceedings against Lollardism, the clergy prevailed upon the King and Parliament to pass the celebrated statute, 2 Henry IV. c. 15; which empowered every bishop in

⁴ Fitzherbert, *New Natura Brevium*, vol. ii. p. 269, ed. 1794: where the form of the writ is given. See also Coke, *Institute* iii. c. v.

his diocese, to convict a man of heresy, and to abjure him ; and afterwards to convict him a second time ; and then to order the sheriff to consign him to the flames. And this precept of the bishop, the sheriff was bound to execute, without waiting for a royal writ to that effect⁵.

It is a remarkable circumstance, that upwards of three years after the passing of this law, namely, in December, 7 & 8 Henry IV., a petition was presented to the King by the Prince of Wales on behalf of the Lords, and by the Speaker on behalf of the Commons, praying that “Lollards, and other speakers and contrivers of news and lies, might be apprehended, and kept in safe custody, till the next Parliament ; there to answer the charges against them.” It has been doubted whether this Bill was intended to come in aid of the Church ; or whether it was designed to operate as a suspension of the statute 2 Henry IV., until the next Session of Parliament⁶. But even if the intents of the proposed enactment were charitable, it probably afforded no relief whatever to the Lollards. For, although the petition received the royal assent, it never, strictly speaking, became law. Either by the intervention of the clergy, or in consequence of some unknown accident, it was never entered among the statutes on the Parliament roll.

⁵ Fitzherbert, *ibid.*

⁶ Mr. Hallam, who refers to *Rot. Parl.* p. 583. 626, suspects that the petition, though professedly aimed against the Lollards, was intended in their favour. Hallam, *Middle Ages*, vol. iii. p. 134, note. See also Tyler, *Memoirs of Henry V.*, vol. ii. p. 333—338.

Proceedings of
Archbishop
Arundel.

It would be tedious to commemorate at length the incessant activity with which the Primate continued to labour for the suppression of Wiclif's writings, for the extirpation of heresy, and for the ruin of the Lollards; or, to recite the various canons and constitutions⁷ framed by him for this purpose, in the course of the several following years. We, therefore, pass on to the accession of Henry V.; a period at which the terror occasioned by the designs imputed to these people appears to have reached its height. It is Violence of the affirmed by Walsingham, that the Lollards had fixed placards to the doors of the London churches, proclaiming that a hundred thousand strong arms were in readiness to enforce their opinions; and he adds that they were instigated to these outrages by Sir John Oldcastle, otherwise Lord Cobham. The history of the transactions in which this nobleman is said to have been implicated, is still involved in considerable obscurity⁸. The issue, however, was, that the prisons of London were filled, that nine and thirty persons were suspended by chains from a gallows, and consumed by a fire kindled beneath them, that Lord Cobham, at last, perished in the same manner, and that another vigorous statute was passed against the Lollards; of which one leading provision was, that all persons employed in civil offices, from the Chancellor down-

⁷ They may be found in Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. iii. See also Lewis, c. vii.

⁸ See Tyler, *Memoirs of Henry V.*, vol. ii. p. 348—392.

ward, should take an oath for the destruction of Lollardy.

The preamble to this statute affirms that "great rumours, congregations, and insurrections, had been raised in the realm of England, by divers liege subjects of the king, as well as by those who belong to the heretical sect called Lollardie, as by others of their confederacy, excitation, and abetment, with a view to annul and subvert the Christian faith and the law of God, in this kingdom ; also, to destroy our Sovereign Lord the King himself, and all manner of estates of this realm, as well spiritual as temporal ; and, moreover, all manner of policy, and finally, all the laws of the land." With every allowance for the exaggerations of bigotry and of terror, it is impossible to believe that imputations so dark were wholly fictitious and unfounded. In the first place, it must be allowed that the clergy had much ground for complaint. The abuse heaped upon them by the Lollards, or, at least, by the more turbulent of their leaders, was not only furious, but indiscriminate. And besides, the Reformers would probably have suffered little to remain untouched, if they had been left entirely to their own impulses. Cathedrals, abbeys, monasteries, might have fallen before them. All endowments might have been swept away : and there was no inconsiderable danger lest piety itself should have been rendered repulsive, by the unsocial austerity which was beginning to furrow the countenance, and to cloud the brow of their religious profession. In addition to this, it can scarcely be denied that the whole fabric of society

Law compelling
all persons in civil
office to take an
oath against Lollardism.

was in some hazard from their principles. There is reason to believe that by certain among them the reign of the saints began to be anticipated ; and that their impatience, if not effectively curbed, might have broken out into very dangerous commotion. Under these circumstances, if the legislature had endeavoured to repress by vigorous laws such manifestations of opinion as threatened the peace and stability of the realm, they would have done nothing which could reasonably merit the censures of the most enlightened age. Unfortunately, however, in those dark times, heresy and rebellion were all but identified in the general estimation. It would, therefore, be the simplest and most effective mode of dealing with the Lollards, to treat them as heretics, rather than as incendiaries and traitors : for, the fire which avenged the outraged purity of the Church, would likewise vindicate the offended majesty of the State. Moreover, the most extravagant of the Romish dogmas was held to be, of all others, the surest test of heresy : and, accordingly, the question with which the hierarchy most usually sought to bring their inquisitions to an issue, was this,—“ Do you believe, or do you not, that material bread remains in the Sacrament, after the words of consecration have been uttered ? ” And if the answer was in the affirmative, nothing remained for the delinquent but a death of excruciating anguish. So that it appeared as if all human crimes were involved in the single enormity of questioning the metaphysics of the Church of Rome.

Bishop Pecock
writes against
the Lollards.

That the Church in this century was possessed by the fiercest spirit of intolerance, is manifest from the fact, that its

fury was not satisfied with the victims offered in honour of her sacramental mystery. She seized upon one of the most illustrious of her own champions, whose principal error was, that he was too enlightened and candid for the age, and condescended to address the reason of the people, instead of contenting himself with an appeal to their credulity or their fears. The distinguished individual in question was Dr. Reginald Pecock, bishop, first of St. Asaph, and afterwards of Chichester. He has been justly described as a man of rare ability, and still rarer moderation ; and, in power and gravity of writing, as, almost, the Hooker of his day. He began his career, indeed, in a direction as orthodox as the hierarchy itself could possibly desire : for he undertook, in a sermon at St. Paul's Cross, the formal vindication of several abuses and delinquencies, which had been loudly arraigned by Wiclif and his followers. He ventured to affirm that bishops were, by the very nature of their office, exempt from the necessity of preaching ; that they are under no obligation to strict residence on their sees ; and that they may receive their bishoprics by Papal *provision*, and pay first-fruits or *annates* to the Pontiff, without justly incurring the charge of simony. It must not, however, be concluded that Pecock's apology for his brethren was dictated by his defective sense of the sacred importance of their duties. His defence is grounded on the principle, that bishops are appointed to a higher function than that of inculcating the elements of faith and holiness from the pulpit. If they were exempt from that burden, it was that they might be more able to exer-

1447.
He defends the bishops.

cise an effectual superintendence over those who were ordained to bear it, and that they might have leisure for the more perfect and important office of *teaching* ; that is, of enforcing religious truth by evidence and argument. Again,—with regard to the absence of bishops from their diocese, he maintained that there were many reasonable causes which might justify their residence elsewhere, and might render it more beneficial to the Church and the realm, than a more constant confinement to the seat of their episcopal office ; especially in those days, when the services of churchmen were so often required, as “*the sage people of his majesty's council.*” His defence of Papal provisions, and payments of first-fruits, however, is entirely grounded on the prodigious absurdity, then current in the Church, that the Pope, as universal pastor, is lord of all the benefices in christendom ; and that it cannot be simoniacial to render him a part, when the whole is rightfully his own.

His “*Repressor.*” The next performance of the bishop was a work to which he gave the title of *Repressor*, its object being to *repress* the indiscriminate spirit of vituperation which had gone forth against ecclesiastics. In this tract, he labours further in vindication of the bishops and clergy ; and, in the true spirit of mildness and peace, endeavours to produce such an exposition of the doctrines and practices of the Church, as might reconcile the dissenting Lollards to her communion. This treatise is valuable, not only as a monument of genuine Christian liberality, but as an interesting exhibition of the state of the controversy, in that day, between the Church and her adversaries. The arguments in favour of

various practices, which the reformers derided and condemned, are often enforced with remarkable ingenuity and acuteness. His justification of pilgrimages, and the religious use of images, is conducted, on the whole, with much felicity and candour. Reliques, he contended, were to be valued only as “rememorative signs” of departed saints, the “devout beholding” of which was approved “by the doom of kindly well-disposed reason.” In one respect, however, if we are to judge by his silence, he found this matter rather untractable. In his defence of images, and pilgrimages, and veneration of reliques, he has not a single syllable on the subject of indulgences; the promise of which was, notoriously one grand motive which attached the populace to these superstitions, and was the main object of attack to Wiclit and his followers.

The *Repressor*, it would appear, notwithstanding the moderation which pervaded the whole work, exposed the bishop to no suspicion, or at least to no open displeasure, from the Church. He was still high in prosperity and honour; and in 1450 was promoted from the see of St. Asaph to that of Chichester. It

* Pascal, two centuries later, took infinitely higher ground than this. “The Holy Ghost,” he says, “reposes, *invisibly*, in the reliques of those who have died in the grace of God, until he appears, *visibly*, in the resurrection. And this is the reason why the reliques of saints are so worthy of veneration. For, God never abandons those that are his, not even in the sepulchre; where their bodies, though dead in the sight of men, are alive before God, because sin abides in them no more.”—*Pensées*. Never, surely, was so superb a disguise thrown by imaginative piety over absurdity and imposture!

His "Treatise of Faith." was not till after his translation that he composed his Treatise of Faith, which proved the source of all his subsequent afflictions ; for it was here that the temper of concession and of candour began to manifest itself in a tone which sounded ominously in the ears of the Papacy. In

He censures the preaching of the Mendicants. the first place, he had the boldness to assail, with as little mercy as Wiclif

himself, the contemptible style of preaching introduced by the Mendicants, who had substituted fable and romance for the eternal truth of the Gospel, and "split the ears" of their staring congregations with vociferous encomiums of their saints : and, by way of embodying his censure in a single phrase, he ventured to give the Friars the ridiculous title of *pulpit-bawlers*. This, however, might possibly have been endured ; for, the intrusive arrogance of the Mendicant orders had long been hateful to multitudes, both of the secular and monastic clergy. But, not content with this, Pecock, in an evil hour for his peace, though, perhaps, a bright one for his fame, placed himself between the main pillars that

Maintains the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and shook them. He maintained, first, that the Holy Scriptures are the substantial foundation of our faith, the only rule or standard of revealed or supernatural truth : and, secondly, that it was a vain and hopeless thing to attempt the reduction of the Lollards by means of a principle so questionable as the infallibility of the priesthood.

It is a very remarkable circumstance, that the tem-

poral lords joined heartily in the persecution which now commenced against Pecock, if they did not actually begin it. The reasons for this may, probably, have been, that he had lost his patron the Duke of Suf-

For these opinions he is forbidden the king's presence, and expelled from the House of Lords.

folk, by whom he is said to have been promoted to the see of Chichester ; and, that several of his doctrines were extremely unpopular among the laity,—more especially the position, that the Pope was master of all the benefices in Christendom. But, whatever may have been the cause, in 1457, he was expelled the House of Lords, and forbidden the king's presence ; and so bitter was the exasperation against him, that the peers refused to proceed with any business, so long as Pecock continued in the House. At

last, he was brought before the primate ^{Convened before the archbishop for heresy.}

other accusations, framed, to all appearance, with a view to deprive him of all sympathy from the people. On these charges he was convicted, and the only choice left him, was that of abjuration or the stake. By this alternative the fortitude of the bishop was overpowered. He replied that “ it would be better for him to become the gazing-stock of the people, than to desert the law of faith, and to be sent after his death into hell fire. He, there-

fore, made it his desire to abjure, and ^{Abjures.}

so to frame his life in future as to give no cause for suspicion or reproach.” By his biographer¹ this answer is stigmatised as weak and abject ; but “ there is more,” as Fuller observes, “ required to

¹ Lewis, p. 158.

make a valiant man, than to call another a coward." It should, moreover, be remembered, that Pecock never professed any renunciation of his fidelity to the Romish Church. For twenty years he had been her faithful, strenuous, though too candid and honourable, champion. It may, therefore, be reasonably presumed that he sincerely dreaded the very thought of rebelliously opposing his judgment to hers ; and that his conduct, on this trying occasion, was prompted by motives similar to those which impelled Fenelon to read publicly, in his own cathedral, the condemnation of certain of his own opinions.

His abjuration was performed under every circumstance of humiliation, which could make it bitter, almost beyond the bitterness of death. He was brought to St. Paul's Cross, in his stole, or episcopal habit, and placed at the archbishop's feet. His books were delivered by his own hand to the officer appointed to cast them into the flames. In the presence of 20,000 people he then read his abjuration wherein he confessed himself a miserable sinner, who had before walked in darkness, but was now, by God's mercy, brought back to the right way ; and he exhorted all men, in the name and virtue of Almighty God, to give no faith or credence to his pernicious doctrines. The cup of his affliction, however, was not yet drained. The Church he had defended did not, indeed, *burn him alive* ; but it may, almost literally, be said that she *buried* him Is imprisoned for life in Thorney Abbey. alive ; for, after stripping him of his *bishopric*, she consigned him to the most rigorous imprisonment for life, within the walls of a monastery. He was sent in the year 1458, to

Thorney Abbey, in Cambridgeshire; and confined there to a single chamber, which he was on no account to leave. All converse with him was strictly forbidden. He was debarred from the use of pen, or ink, or paper, or even of books, with the exception of a mass-book, a Psalter, a legend, and a Bible. His diet, for the first quarter of his imprisonment, was to be the same with the daily allowance of the convent; afterwards, that of a sick or aged brother, with such further indulgence as his health and years might require. How long the bishop survived, under this cruel captivity, is unknown. It is probable that his miseries were shortly terminated, though various accounts are given of his death.

Such was the end of this eminent churchman, undoubtedly among the most² learned of his age and country. His spirit was far too equitable and moderate for the period in which he lived. Instead of assailing the Lollards with asperity and menace, he treated them with gentleness and patience,—he heard their scruples and objections with paternal mildness, —nay, he even thought that heretics might lawfully be argued with, before they were finally delivered over to the secular arm, as incorrigibly obstinate: and these, of themselves, were practical heresies of the darkest complexion, in the eyes of a priesthood, who would hear of nothing but implicit faith. His fate was a dreadful warning to the inquisitive world!

² His learning, however, like most of the learning of his time, comprehended but little Greek. He confounds Cephas with *κεφαλὴ*, and translates it *head*: and he derives orthodoxy from *δρθδς*, *right*, and *δόξα*, *glory*!—The Life of Bishop P., by Mr. Lewis, is a very interesting and instructive volume.

If Bishop Pecock, the illustrious defender of the Church, was to be entombed in a dungeon, what was to be expected by those who openly assailed her tyranny and corruption ?

It is a very memorable circumstance in the story of this extraordinary man, that his life was passed in a conflict with the errors of Wiclif; and yet that, after his death, his name was solemnly coupled with the name of the Reformer, and, in that company was, in due form, consigned to immortality. The foundation of King's College, Cambridge, took place about fourteen years before Pecock's conviction and imprisonment: but a clause was subsequently added to the statutes of the society, providing, that every scholar, on the expiration of his probationary years, should take an oath, that he would not favour the condemned opinions or heresies of *John Wiclif, Reginald Pecock*, or any other heretic, so long as he should live, on pain of perjury and expulsion, *ipso facto*³. And it is still more curious, that in spite of this royal enactment, King's College turned out to be one of the most heretical societies in the University !

The whole period of intestine commotion, and more especially the reign of Edward IV., afford but scanty materials for Church history. The civil wars suspended for a time the work of religious persecu-

³ *Item statuimus, ordinamus, et volumus, quod quilibet Scholaris, in admissione sua in Collegium nostrum Regale predictum post annos probationis, juret quod non favebit opinionibus damnatis, erroribus, aut heresibus Johannis Wiclif, Reginaldi Pecock, neque alicujus alterius heretici, quamdiu vixerit in hoc mundo, sub pena perjurii, et expulsionis ipso facto.* Lewis's Pecock, p. 173.

tion. The reign of Henry VII., whom all parties were disposed to welcome as the minister of conciliation, brought with it no peace or safety to the Lollards. On the contrary, the new reign exposed them to aggravated perils and sufferings. One revolting instance of this monarch's wanton inhumanity is related by Fox. There was at Canterbury an aged priest, so firmly rooted in the heresies of Wiclif, that all the clerks and doctors of the place were unable to remove, or even to shake him. The obstinacy of this confessor reached the ears of the king, who felt impelled to undertake the adventure of reclaiming him. A royal polemic is proverbially irresistible. The Christian divine, like the philosopher of old, was unable to withstand the master of legions, and surrendered his opinions to the force of imperial logic. The conqueror, however, made a most detestable use of his victory. The unhappy convert was burnt immediately on his abjuration, and derived no other advantage from his encounter with the king, than the benefit of perishing in communion with the *Catholic* Church. The martyrdom of an aged Martyrdom of Jo-woman, named Joanna Baughton. ^{Joanna Baughton.} left another blot upon the reign of this cold-blooded monarch. She was upwards of fourscore, when she was called to suffer for her faithful adherence to the opinions of the Reformer, whom she honoured as an eminent saint. Her venerable years afforded her no protection. She was informed that the stake would be the certain recompense of her perseverance in disbelief. She rendered her soul, in the midst of the flames, with admirable constancy ; and her ashes were collected as precious memorials of her martyr-

dom. But the measure of atrocity remained yet to be filled up. At Amersworth, a heretic, ^{Martyrdom of} Tylsworth, was consigned to the flames: and, with a refinement in barbarity, which might excite the envy of a North-American savage, his only daughter, who had also fallen under suspicion, was compelled to kindle the pile, that was to consume her own father by an agonizing death. One man there was, in those days, who disgraced the priesthood, by adding vulgar buffoonery to brutal inhumanity.

^{Bishop Nix.} Bishop Nix, of Norwich, mortally infamous for his alacrity in persecution, when he spoke of persons supposed to carry about with them the taint of heresy, described them as men who savoured of the *frying-pan*. The extent of havoc inflicted by this infatuation of the clergy and the sovereign, may be tolerably estimated, even from the sportive hyperbole of a correspondent of Erasmus, who declares, that the frequency of executions at Smithfield had advanced the price of fire-wood in the neighbourhood of London. That it could have made a single sincere convert, is utterly incredible. That it must gradually have alienated the heart of England, can scarcely be doubted. "Curses not loud but deep," must have been muttered against these triumphs of the dungeon and the stake; although the multitude of dreadful examples may generally have been too much for the weakness of flesh and blood. From many a sincere believer in the reforming doctrines, the words of abjuration were extorted by the terrors of the fire; and these appearances of success may have strengthened the Church in her system of butchery. Recantation,

however, had no power to mitigate her spirit ; and *cruel*, indeed, were her *tender mercies* towards the wretched victims of infirmity and fear. They were spared the death of martyrs, only that they might linger out a life of martyrdom. With a faggot on their shoulder, they were compelled to witness the dying agonies of their more intrepid brethren. With the likeness of a faggot, wrought or painted, on their sleeve, and with the Inhumanity towards those who abjured. mark of heresy branded on their cheek, they were sent forth almost to utter excommunication. They who wore this badge were nearly sure to perish for want of employment and support ; they who, for an hour, dared to lay it aside, were as certainly consigned to the flames. And the horrible fate which thus awaited them, passed into a proverb—*Put it off and be burnt, keep it on and be starved.* But the soul sickens at the recital of these enormities. It finds no relief but in the recollection that the hour of deliverance was at hand. It was drawing nigh, with a noiseless and stealthy pace. “Retribution,” it is said, “has a foot of velvet, but a hand of steel.” In the midst of the cry of persecution, the approach of ruin was unheard, and unsuspected. But the arm was, even then, on the point to be uplifted, which was to smite the scalp of this gigantic oppression ; and the blast was about to go forth, which, in this land, at least, was to level its towers in the dust.

These cruelties eventually fatal to the Papacy in England.

NOTICE OF THE WRITINGS OF WICLIF.

IT has already appeared, from the preceding narrative, that no efforts were spared, by the adversaries of Wiclit's doctrine, for the suppression of the works in which it was conveyed to the public. Their vigilance and activity, however, were signally baffled. In spite of this posthumous persecution, the Reformer, though dead, still continued to speak ; and it has been conjectured, that three-fourths of his writings survive at this day. Of those compositions of Wiclit which have perished, the greater part is supposed to consist of scholastic treatises, the loss of which may, perhaps, be endured without any immoderate regret. That portion which remains may be contemplated as the furniture of a vast and ancient armory, hung round with the weapons of a warfare, the final issue of which is more or less felt, to this hour, throughout the civil and religious institutions of our country.

If the recommendation of Dr. Todd, (adverted to in the Preface to this volume), should ever be adopted, and an attempt should be made to publish all the works which bear the name of Wiclit, the labour will be found to demand no ordinary perseverance and sagacity. It is a work which may require the services of many heads, and of many hands. And "they who would engage in it, must be above the narrow influences of modern utilitarianism. They must keep in view a higher field of

learning than comes within the sphere of mercantile speculators in literature, or useful knowledge societies. They must feel that the value of these documents, as compositions, is but a secondary object of their publication. The great end must be the discovery of truth ; and the preservation of the remains of an illustrious character in our history¹."

Some notion of the difficulty of the task may be formed from the fact, that such of these very voluminous writings as are to be found in this country, are scattered throughout its private and public libraries : and, further, from the circumstance remarked by Dr. Todd, that " Bishop Bale,—from whose Catalogue of the Reformer's works all subsequent writers have copied,—appears to have transcribed, without much discrimination, the titles of all that he found in the manuscripts to which he had access ; or, which were attributed to Wiclif by his enemies or by his friends : and, that the existence of a tract in any collection, containing one or more of the pieces usually attributed to Wiclif, was, with Bale, evidence sufficient to induce him to enter it among the Reformer's writings²."

The Catalogue of Bale has been reprinted, with many additions, by Mr. John Lewis, the indefatigable biographer of Wiclif³. But even he regrets that he

¹ Preface to Dr. Todd's edition of "The Last Age of the Church," p. x.

² Introduction to Dr. Todd's edition of the "Apology for Lollard Doctrines," p. xvi.

³ History of the Life and Sufferings of John Wiclif, D.D., together with a Collection of Papers and Records relating to the said History. By John Lewis, Minister of Meregate (Margate). Printed at the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1820.

was without opportunities or facilities for acquiring a perfect acquaintance with the works of the Reformer. A valuable list has also been compiled by Mr. Baber⁴,—author of the “Historical Account of the Saxon and English Versions of the Scriptures, previously to the opening of the 15th century,” prefixed by him to his edition of Wiclid’s translation of “the New Testament.” Lastly, a Catalogue has been published by Mr. Vaughan⁵, the result of a very laborious and comprehensive search, amongst all the repositories of ancient learning in the kingdom.

These labours, however,—highly meritorious and useful as they are,—still leave the question of Wiclid’s services and merits in an unsatisfactory condition. The great work of a complete edition of his reputed writings still remains to be performed. And until it is accomplished,—and this, by men who are able to help us through the difficulty of distinguishing his own genuine compositions, from those which may have been hastily or ignorantly ascribed to him,—no perfect or impartial justice can be rendered to his memory.

When the first edition of this volume went to the press, there was some reason to hope that the University of Oxford was about to publish Wiclid’s Version of the Old Testament, and that the Rev. J. Forshall, and Sir F. Madden, librarians of the British Museum, were preparing the same for the Clarendon Press. Whether the project has been abandoned I am not informed; but, unfortunately, no such publication has yet appeared.

⁴ Memoirs of Wiclid. By the Rev. H. Baber. Lond. 1810.

⁵ Life of John de Wycliffe, D.D., by Robert Vaughan, London, 1831.

APPENDIX.

SPECIMENS OF WICLIF'S TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

PSALM II.

WHI gnastiden with teeth hethene men, and pupils thoughten
veyn thingis. The kyngis of eerthe stoden to gidre, and princes
camen to gidre aghens the Lord and aghens his Crist. Breke
we the boondis of hem, and cast we away the yock of hem fro
us. He that dwelleth in hevenes schal scorne hem : and the
Lord schal bemowe hem. Thanne he schal speke to hem in his
ire ; and schal distrouble hem in his stronge vengeance. For
sothe I am maad of him a kyng on Sion his hooli hil, prechynge
his commandementis. The Lord seide to me, thou art my sone ;
I have gendred thee to day. Axe thou of me and I shall gheve
to thee hethene men thine heritage : and thi possessioun the
teermes of the eerthe. Thou shalt governe hem in an yren
gherd¹, and thou shalt breke hem as a vessel of a potter. And
naw, ye kyngis, understande : ye that deemen the erthe be
lernid. Serve ye to the Lord with dred : and make ye, ful
oute, joie to him with trembling. Take ye lore : leest the Lord
be wrooth sumtyme : and leest ye perischen fro the right weye.
Whaune his ire brenneth oute in shorte tyme, blessed ben alle
thei that tristene in him.—*Public Lib. Camb. Dd. I. 27.*

PSALM XVIII.

Lord mi strenkthe, I schal love thee. The Lord is my sted-
fastnesse and my refuyt, and my deliverer. My God is myne

¹ An iron yard, or rod.

helper, and I shall hope into hym : my defender and the horne of my heelpe, and myne uptaker. I schall preise and inwardli clepe² the Lord, and I schal be saaf fro myne enemies. The sorowis of deeth cumpassiden me, and the floudis of wickidnesse distroubliden me. The sorowis of helle cumpassiden, the snaris of deeth bifore occupieden me. In my tribulacioun I inwarldly clepide the Lord, and I cried to my God : and he herde my vois fro his hooli temple, and my crie in his sight entride into his eeris. The erthe was movid to gidre, and trembled to gidre. The foundementis of the hillis weren troublid to gidre, and weren movid to gidre, for he was wroth to hem. Smoke flyede in the ire of him, and fier brent out fro his face : coolis weren kyndlid of him. He bowyide down hevenes and came down, and derkenesse was under hise feet. And he flyede on Cherubym, and he fleye over the pennis of wyndis. He settyde derkenessis his hidyng place, his tabernacle in his cumpass. Derk watir was in the cloudis of the lower eir. Ful cleer cloudis passiden in his sight ; hail and the coolis of fier. And the Lord thundrider from hevene, and the highest yeve his vois : hail and the coolis of fier camen down. And he sente his arewis, and distroied tho men. He multiplied leytis³, and distroublide hem. And the wellis of wateris apperiden ; and the foundementis of the erthe weren schewid, Lord, of thi blamynge, of the brething of the spirit of thin ire.—*Public Lib. Camb. Dd. I. 27.*

MATTHEW, CHAP. V.

And Jhesus seynge the peple, went up into an hil ; and whanne he was sett, his disciplis camen to him, And he openyde his mouthe, and taughte hem ; and seide, Blessid be pore men in spirit ; for the kyngdom of hevenes is herun⁴. Blessid ben mylde men : for thei schulenweelde the erthe. Blessid ben thei that mournen ; for thei schal be coumfortid. Blessid be thei that hungren and thirsten rigtwisnesse⁵ : for thei schal be fulfilled. Blessid ben merciful men : for thei schul gete mercy. Blessed ben thei that ben of clene herte :

² Call upon.⁴ Theirs.³ Lights, or lightnings.⁵ rigtfulnesse MS. *plures*.

for thei schulen se god. Blessid ben pesible men : for thei schulen be clepid goddis children. Blessid ben thei that suffren persecucioun for rightwisnesse : for the kyngdom of hevenes is hern. Ye schul be blessid whanne men schul curse you, and schul pursue you : and schul seye al yvel agens you lyng for me. Joie ye and be ye glade : for your meede is plenteous in hevenes : for so thei han pursued also prophetis that weren bifore you. Ye ben salt of the erthe, that if the salt vanishe awey wherynne schal it be salted ? to nothing it is worth over, no but it be cast out, and be defoulid of men. Ye ben light of the world, a citee sett on an hill may not be hid. Ne me teendith not a lanterne and puttith it undir a bushel : but on a candilstik that it give light to alle that ben in the hous. So, schyne your light bifore men, that thei see youre gode workis, and glorifie your fadir that is in hevenes. Nyle ghe deme that I cam to undo the Lawe or the prophetis, I cam not to undo the lawe but to fulfille. Forsothe I sey to you till hevene and erthe passe, oon lettre, or oon title, schal not passe fro the Lawe til alle thingis be don. Therfore he that brekith oon of these leeste maundementis, and techith thus men, schal be clepid the Leest in the rewme of hevenes : but he that doth, and techith, schal be clepid greet in the kyngdom of hevenes.—*Baber's Edit.*

1 CORYNTH. XIJI.

If I speke with tungis of men and of aungels and I haue not charite, I am maad as bras sownynge, or a cymbal tynklynge, and if I haue profecie and know alle mysteries and al kynnyng, and if I haue al feith, so that I moue hillis fro her place, and I haue not charite I am noughe. and if I departe alle my goodis into the metis of pore men, and if I bitake my bodi so that I brenne and if I haue not charite it profitith to me no thing. charite is pacient, it is benyng⁶. charite enuyeth not, it doith not wickidli, it is not blowun⁷. it is not coueitous, it sekith not tho thingis that ben hise own. it is not stired to wraththe, it thenkith not youel, it ioieth not on wickidnesse, but it ioieth togidre to treuthe, it suffrith alle thingis,

⁶ Benign.⁷ Puffed up.

it billeueth alle thingis, it hopith alle thingis, it susteyneth alle thingis. charite fallith neuere doun. whethir profecies schulen be voidid, eithir langagis schulen ceese, eithir science schal be distried. for ⁸ aparti we knownen, and aparti we profecien, but whanne that schal come that is parfyt, that thing that is of parti schal be auoidid. whanne I was a litil child I spak as a litil child, I undirstood as a litil childe, I thoughte as a litil child ; but whanne I was maade a man I voidide tho thingis that weren of a litil child. and we seen now bi a ⁹ myrour ¹ in derknesse, but thanne face to face. now I knowe of parti, but thanne I schal knowe as I am knowun. and now dwellen feith, hope and charite these thre, but the moost of these is charite.—*Baber's Edit.*

⁸ ex parte.

⁹ speculum.

¹ in ænigmate.



THE END.

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